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ESSAYS AND REVIEWS.

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FOR

EDMONSTON AND DOUGLAS.

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Henry H. Lancaster

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ESSAYS AND REVIEWS

BY THE LATE

HENRY H. LANCASTER

ADVOCATE

With a Prefatory Notice

BY THE REV. B. JOWETT

MASTER OF BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD

EDINBURGH

EDMONSTON AND DOUGLAS

1876.



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P R E F A C E.

I HAVE been asked to add a few words of preface to this volume of Reviews, written by a deceased friend and former pupil. He would have been a distinguished man if he had lived, and those who have an affection for his memory are naturally desirous that he should be known to the world as he was to them. He was taken suddenly from his family and friends in the fulness of health and strength, at a time when the difficulties of his career were over, and he was beginning to reap the harvest of success. Those who had opportunities of judging were confident that he would soon have attained the highest honours of his profession; and his literary talents, if he had written with his name, would certainly have gained him eminence. He was always going forward, and had he been spared a few years longer would probably have done much more than he did. He often expressed to an intimate friend the ambition which he felt to produce some permanent work, and would sketch out in conversation a book upon the principal subjects of English politics, which had long been in his thoughts.

But this design, though never given up, remained unfulfilled; it was not possible for him to find the leisure which would have been required for such a work.

The Reviews contained in this volume were composed, together with a good many others, in the intervals of a busy professional life. They have a peculiar value to those who knew him, because his own character is reflected in them. He wrote as he talked, with great simplicity and energy. His was a strong and manly intellect, remarkably fair and straightforward; he had no crotchets or sentimentalisms; he said exactly what he meant. His criticisms, though not marked by any striking originality of language or thought, come home to the reader as having the pre-eminent merit of being always careful and just. The discussions on Scottish history are very interesting and instructive, quite free from national or any other prejudice. The subtle characters of the two Lords Stair are analysed by him with a true historical tact. He does justice, which from a purely political point of view has seldom been rendered, to the greatness of John Knox. The same impartial judgment is applied to the latest phase of the never-ending controversy respecting Mary Queen of Scots.

He did not aim at novelty, and was never much given to youthful enthusiasm of any kind. His literary tastes inclined to the last generation rather than to the present. He had a much greater love of history and politics than of poetry or philosophy.

Of recent writers he would probably have rated Lord Macaulay most highly : the Memoir of that great man, which has appeared during the present year, would have been read by him with singular interest and delight. To some persons he would have appeared old-fashioned in his views of life and of the world. Though certainly intended by nature for anything rather than a puritan or an ascetic, he was a great enemy to "new moralities." He was not wanting in the respect due to genius, which he was quite capable of appreciating, but he would have insisted that the eccentricities of a man of genius, like those of any other man, should be brought to the test of common sense. He seriously disapproved of the philosophy, or rather of the wayward fancy, which puts might in the place of right : it seemed to him to sacrifice history and to be subversive of morality. His mind was characteristically English. Though a Liberal in politics he was also Conservative ; and there was a certain class of new ideas and exaggerated modes of expressing them, to which he always entertained a strong repugnance. As he says of himself in one of his reviews, "he had a weakness for reading what he could understand."

He came up from the University of Glasgow to Balliol College, Oxford, as a Snell Exhibitioner in the year 1848, and he obtained a First Class in Easter 1853. To say the truth, he was an undergraduate not easy to manage, though generally industrious and always energetic. But he soon came right again, and greater faults than his ever were would have been more than counterbalanced by his attachment to his

friends, and his gratitude to any one who showed him kindness. Both at the University and in after life he had the faculty of drawing others round him by his vivacity and the geniality of his temperament. They were anxious to know what he had to say on any topic of the day ; for his thoughts were his own, and not taken from others. Every one was at ease with him ; he could not only talk himself, but he made his companions talk by his great good humour and his quick appreciation of everything that was said to him. He may at times have been a little extravagant in his mirth ; and where he was, there was certainly no danger of dulness or ennui. Dr. Johnson has said that “every man may be judged of by his laughter ;” and “tried by this standard,” his biographer adds, “he was himself by no means contemptible.” Those who knew our friend will have no difficulty in applying these words to him. Yet there was no time at which he was not a hard worker, and in earnest about many things. He had great political knowledge, and took a warm interest in several questions of the day. The cause of Scottish Education, and especially of University Education, owes much to his writings and his influence. One of his latest productions was an excellent paper which he contributed as a Commissioner to the Report on Scottish Hospitals, respecting the principles to be applied to the alteration of trusts.

The last time I saw him was two years ago at Loch Kennard, when we parted at a small station on the Aberfeldy Railway. His two little girls,

children of seven and nine, went with us to the station, where we arrived half-an-hour before the train started. This gave occasion to a childish remark made by one of them which greatly pleased him. The elder child had said, "It was better to be too early than too late." "A very sententious observation," he said to her in his peculiar manner. But the younger one thought that "it was better to be too late than too early, because if you loved your friend very much you went back and saw him again." He was delighted at this. Such trifles may seem hardly worth repeating, but they have a value when they are the last remembrances of a friend. The death of his little son occurred in the following year, and was the one great affliction of his otherwise bright and happy life.

There are many who will miss that hearty welcome which he was in the habit of giving to his friends, who sadly feel that they will not again hear that well-known laugh, who have been impressed by the never-flagging activity of his mind, equally ready for an argument or a game of whist. But there are few comparatively who knew what force of character, and perseverance, and public spirit, and strength of attachment, lay concealed under that gay and joyous exterior.

B. JOWETT.

NOTE.

I have to thank the proprietors of the
“EDINBURGH” and “NORTH BRITISH REVIEWS”
for their kindness in allowing the republication
of the Articles which originally appeared in those
Reviews.

M. L.

AINSLIE PLACE,
October 1876.



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BURTON'S HISTORY OF SCOTLAND.¹

PRINCIPAL ROBERTSON in his review of Scottish history divides it into four periods—the first from the origin of the monarchy to the reign of Kenneth II. ; the second from Kenneth's alleged conquest of the Picts to the death of Alexander III. ; the third from the date of that calamity to the death of James V. ; the last from thence to the union of the crowns under James VI.

The first of these periods he considers a region of "pure fable and conjecture," which "ought to be totally neglected, or abandoned to the industry and credulity of antiquaries." Truth, he thinks, "begins to dawn in the second period, with a light, feeble at first, but gradually increasing, and the events which then happened may be slightly touched, but merit no particular or laborious inquiry." With the third period, however, authentic history begins ; contemporary records exist from which the manners of the age can be gathered, and the characters of the actors can be pictured : "here every Scotsman should not read only, but study the history of his country." While in the fourth period Scotland is truly described

¹ "The History of Scotland ; from Agricola's Invasion to the Revolution of 1688." By John Hill Burton. 4 vols. Edinburgh and London : 1867.—[Reprinted from the "Edinburgh Review," No. 257. July 1867.]

as so mixed up with the great changes then agitating every nation in Europe, that without some knowledge of Scottish history it is difficult to form a just appreciation of the most momentous events, or the most prominent figures of the sixteenth century.

A similar conception of Scottish history would seem to have been present to the mind of Mr. Burton. He appears to have fully adopted Robertson's sentiment that "nations, as well as men, arrive at maturity by degrees, and the events which happened during their infancy or early youth, cannot be recollected, and deserve not to be remembered." Accordingly, he has treated the first of the above periods almost exclusively from the antiquarian point of view; and, however we may admire his "industry," we can trace little of that "credulity" which Robertson imputes to the antiquarian race. In truth no Scottish historian with whom we are acquainted has shown a franker contempt for Scottish legend, or a greater indifference to Scottish prejudice. Mr. Burton has applied those principles of historical inquiry which Niebuhr first laid down, and which Sir George Lewis made familiar to us; and under this searching light the so-called history of centuries has vanished away like the mist on a Scottish hill. Not till the days of Malcolm Canmore (1057-93) does he recognise the dawn of true history. That prince is the first king of the Scots who has anything like an individuality about him—who is "more than a name and a pair of dates with a list of battles between." The controversy which disturbed the dinner-table at Monkbarns moves Mr. Burton but little. He shows, indeed, hardly less contempt than the Antiquary himself for the list of Pictish kings enumerated by Sir Arthur Wardour—"that bead-roll of unbaptised jargon that would choke the Devil!" and as to the Pictish people he seems

utterly indifferent as to what they were, where they came from, or where they went to, doubtful in fact whether they ever had any separate existence whatever from other savages, except so far as their use of paint may be considered distinctive. Mr. Burton may offend some antiquaries by this indifference; while, by his acceptance of the theory that Scotchmen were originally Irishmen, he will certainly rouse the wrath of thorough-going patriots, who outstrip even antiquaries in vehemence and credulity. But we pass for the present Mr. Burton's chapters on the early races and the early Church of Scotland; they are so full of vigour and originality that they deserve to be considered apart, and we hope ere long to have a suitable opportunity of reverting to them. Our immediate concern at this time is with the historical part of Mr. Burton's book properly so called.

The two points in Scottish history which deserve, and will repay, careful study—though doubtless in a very different degree—are the War of Independence and the Reformation. These great struggles have an interest altogether apart from and beyond the feuds and forays of the Kingly period. In them we see great principles at work; in the one creating a nation, in the other giving dignity and force to national life. In such themes Mr. Burton is peculiarly at home, and the light which he has thrown upon the real nature of the War of Independence is perhaps the most valuable part of his labours. He introduces the subject by a minute and careful statement of Edward's claims, and of the pleadings before him for the prize of the Scottish Crown. It was a barren prize to the successful competitor; it would have been the same to any one who accepted it from Edward's award. That sagacious prince had no intention that his feudal superiority should be nominal. His best defence is

that his designs went far beyond this. And we cannot but think it rash in English writers to peril Edward's reputation on so narrow an issue as the validity of this claim. It is hard to believe that he troubled himself much about the rights of the matter : valid or invalid, he saw in such a claim a ready and powerful means to a great end, and he used it accordingly. Indeed the whole question of the feudal superiority of the kings of England over those of Scotland has been debated with a wealth of learning and a warmth of temper utterly disproportionate to the subject. No better illustration could be found of the truth of Lord Macaulay's remark, that our historians and antiquarians have been always prone to conduct their researches in the spirit of partisans. While the Treaty of Union was in dependence, this question had a practical and important bearing. But now, when no shadow of its former importance remains, the vehemence with which the discussion has been carried on excites our wonder. As a rule the feeling has been keenest on the Scotch side—though no Scottish writer has reached the unseemly extravagance of the author of the *Greatest of the Plantagenets*. Tytler denounces "the absurd and unfounded claim of the feudal superiority of England over this country." Hume, more temperately, speaks of the claim as one "which had hitherto lain in the deepest obscurity." Lingard, on the other side, holds that the kings of England "for centuries claimed, and occasionally exercised, the right of superiority." Sir Francis Palgrave regards the documents collected by him from the Record Office as conclusive on the question.

Mr. Lingard in support of his belief in the antiquity of the claim goes far back into the Saxon times ; he rests strongly, for example, on an inroad by Athelstan into Scotland in the year 934, in the course of

which Constantine (a supposed Scotch king) "was compelled to implore the clemency of the conqueror." But raids of this sort, even if authentic, can never be relied on as the foundation for a claim of feudal superiority ; and nothing but raids of this sort can be got from the Saxon times. Mr. Lingard's Saxon authorities are therefore open to two somewhat serious objections : the facts are by no means beyond dispute ; and there was no law recognised by the parties to which those facts, if authentic, could be applied. This branch of the case is stated with perfect fairness by Mr. Hume :—

"The whole amount of Edward's authorities during the Saxon period, when stripped of the bombast and inaccurate style of the monkish historians, is, that the Scots had sometimes been defeated by the English, had received peace on disadvantageous terms, had made submissions to the English Monarch, and had even perhaps fallen into dependence on a power which was so much superior, and which they had not at that time sufficient force to resist."

During the Norman period the case was different. No one can dispute that after the Conquest there existed, on the English side at least, a perfect comprehension of feudal law, and a perfect appreciation of the consequences which the rendering of homage by the Scottish kings might entail. From hence, therefore, the question turns more on the facts of the case—that is, on the extent of homage rendered. The authorities are all English ; some of them not beyond the suspicion of having been garbled so as to bring out with additional force what we may, without a great lack of charity, suppose to have been the natural leaning of the writers. Yet even with such materials no clear case can be made out for England. No case can be quoted in which the kings of Scotland did homage *expressly* for the whole kingdom of Scotland.

Accordingly Scotch historians have contended that in the early instances, of which the statement is generally vague, the homage was rendered only for the lands held south of the border—a limitation which in the later instances was carefully expressed. Mr. Burton doubts this, “not believing that the grades and ceremonies of homage were then (1073) so far advanced as to admit of one of these complicated transactions.” We hardly think Mr. Burton’s doubt justified by his reason. Malcolm Canmore may have been little skilled in the subtleties of the feudal law. If so, then he was ignorant of what he was doing, and the rendering of homage on his part is thus deprived of any higher authority than the vague “submissions” of the Anglo-Saxon times. But the Normans were quite familiar with such “complicated transactions.” The feudal system was then in its zenith; the relations of the kings of England to the French Crown with respect to the lands they held in France exemplified the very grades and ceremonies to which Mr. Burton alludes. On their side, at least, there could have been no difficulty in appreciating such a limitation as that for which Scotch writers contend. At all events, whatever may have been the precise nature of the homage rendered by Malcolm, it is certain that the raids into England never ceased—showing plainly that, instead of a vassal, William had an independent and turbulent neighbour on his northern frontier. Mr. Burton compares the early relations between the Scotch and the Normans to the relations between the Franks and the later Empire, between the Norsemen and the Count of Paris. The wild marauders are ready enough to do homage for estates and honours given and received as bribes; but no homage would bind them to peace, the forays were renewed as soon as ended.

“The whole story has a significant resemblance to the attempts of the King of France to buy off and soothe the Norsemen, whose chief professed all due homage in proper form, yet, according to a common legend, took a sly opportunity, in his awkwardness in court fashions, to trip up the paramount monarch in the course of the ceremony.”—Vol. ii. p. 79.

Perhaps the treaty of Falaise (1174) first gave the Scottish kings a clear idea of what the English feudalists were driving at. By the terms of that treaty Henry exacted from his captive William the Lion an obligation for absolute homage for the whole kingdom of Scotland. But it may be plausibly urged that the excessive pains then taken to declare the infeudation of Scotland, go far to show that the matter was by no means clear. The terms of the treaty indicate a victory gained, not an existing right declared. The anxiety shown to wrest it from the helplessness of a captive proves the value attached to the point it conceded. And in 1189, Richard, for the price of ten thousand marks, restored to Scotland her independence, and withdrew the conditions which his father had enforced by new deeds and owing to the captivity of William (*per novas chartas et captionem suam*). From henceforward no instance can be given of general homage, however vague in expression; and by the Treaty of Brigham in 1290, the independence of Scotland was fully and fairly recognised.

After all, conceding to the advocates of the English claims everything they contend for, what do they succeed in establishing? Feudal superiority never implied a right of conquest or absorption. Louis XI. was the feudal superior of Philip the Bold: but did that prevent the independence of Burgundy? Still more idle seems this famed discussion when we look at the

changes of dynasty which took place in England. Let Athelstan and Canute have been as terrible and as oppressive to the Scotch as they are alleged to have been, what can the Conqueror claim in virtue of their power? He was not the legal inheritor of the rights either of the Saxon or of the Dane. He conquered the Saxon in England; the Saxon in Scotland he did not conquer. He tried it and failed: in the words of the Chronicle, his invasion gave him "naught of which he was the better." He may have extorted homage from the king; he established no right of conquest over the people. And had such a thing been in his power, he was not the man to leave the accomplishment of it in doubt.

It is surprising how readily modern writers have allowed themselves to follow those litigious Normans into the subtleties of which they were so fond. It is not by such considerations that Edward should be judged. He set before himself a great end; if he found the claim of superiority a useful means to that end, he was justified in using it; but it is frivolous to determine the rectitude of his conduct by the validity of that claim. Rather does he seem, in our judgment, to lose in dignity by the tricks and shifty devices and the unscrupulous use of the new science of conveyancing to which he stooped in the endeavour to make it good.

On the other hand we cannot but regard it as a shallow patriotism which would load with undiscerning vituperation the memory of the great Plantagenet. That in the furtherance of his aims he showed but little regard for the rights of others, and still less for their prejudices, we readily admit; but we cannot hold him more unscrupulous in this respect than many of the greatest statesmen of all ages. His was no vulgar ambition. He was no conqueror for the

mere sake of conquest—still less for the love of glory. In his practical views he reminds us somewhat of the later career of Frederic the Great ; certainly he stands far above men influenced by such common motives as those which stirred Henry v. and Louis xiv. In the feeble reign of his grandfather the continental possessions of England had been wrested from her ; and he saw, with the foresight of a statesman, that this loss would be a gain if England should thereby be enabled to make the whole island at one with herself. He did not purpose, at least in the first instance, harsh and cruel subjugation ; his nobler aim was the gradual creation of a United Empire.

He failed, and his failure brought with it unmixed disaster to the weaker kingdom. During the long period of turbulence which followed on the death of Bruce, Scotland was made hideous with all the miseries, not dignified with the majesty of war. Indeed the tumults which then raged did not deserve the name of war ; they were not efforts to maintain an independence seldom in serious jeopardy, they were rather feuds between the nobles, or assaults by the nobles on the Crown. The triumph of Bannockburn bore no better fruit than the uncontrolled license of a rude aristocracy—the fitful efforts of the Crown to restrain that license—and the profound misery of the people. When the reins of power had fallen from the vigorous hands of the Regent Randolph, the country became the scene of endless turmoil. The reigns of the Roberts were marked by the murder of the heir-apparent, the disaffection and treason of the most powerful nobles. The first and ablest of the Stuarts was assassinated. The second had to contend with repeated rebellions. The third, who has been recently represented as an amiable and accomplished prince, was defeated by his insurgent nobles

and slain. James v. spent his days in useless struggles with his chief subjects, and died at length heart-broken by their treacherous desertion. The earlier years of James vi. were little better than a disguised captivity.

During such times no sound Constitution could grow up. Accordingly, the Scottish Parliament, even in its perfected form, was never powerful for good. The burgesses had indeed been summoned to it from an early period ; but they cared little to come, and for all they could accomplish, might as well have stayed away. Occasionally they passed useful laws, which the great nobles disregarded at their pleasure. Public spirit was roused by no great questions of taxation as in England, probably because there was nothing to tax. The history of revenue has been called the history of liberty ; and perhaps Scotland failed to achieve constitutional liberty because there were no revenue questions which could serve as the field of battle. The defects of the Scotch Parliament are too well known to be repeated, were it not that Mr. Burton has rather glossed them over. The Three Estates voted together. No question was brought before them unless recommended by the Lords of the Articles—a private committee, really though not in form nominated by the Crown. The Acts of Session were drawn up at the close by the Clerk Register according to his own idea of what the votes and resolutions of the Estates might signify. The extent of the King's prerogative was undetermined ; and the Parliament had not the power of electing their Speaker—the Chancellor presiding *ex officio*. Such a Constitution afforded no security for liberty—a powerful prince had everything his own way. In early times the liberties of the nation had little to fear from the monarchy ; but when the King was enabled to wield

the whole strength of England, the want of constitutional safeguards made itself felt. Everybody knows how the Parliaments of the English Stuarts, led by profligate statesmen and subservient lawyers, sat only to register the edicts of the King. Then Scottish history was the history of alien domination and disastrous revolt—a fawning aristocracy, a corrupt clergy, an enraged and rebellious people—churchmen like Sharp, sectaries like Burley, statesmen like Perth and Melfort. There were doubtless many causes which brought about all this evil; but much of it was certainly owing to the absence of any constitutional restraints on the Sovereign, and to the want of that steady and rational spirit of independence which familiarity with the use of such restraints gives to a people. The Stuarts, with all the will in the world, could never make such wild work with the liberties of England.

In material well-being Scotland lost even more by the War of Independence. As an independent kingdom she had little leisure for the pursuits of peace. A transitory gleam of prosperity shone out in the early days of James IV.—soon to vanish in the ever-recurring storm. The union of the Crowns, so far from being a gain, was in this respect a detriment to her. During Cromwell's administration, indeed, complete conquest brought with it a rich consolation in free-trade between the countries, and the privilege of sharing in the expanding commerce of England. But, with the exception of this brief period, during the unprecedented prosperity which England enjoyed from the accession of James I. to the fall of James II., Scotland was steadily becoming poorer. The extent of this evil may be best illustrated by a contrast. It is a terrible thing to say of a nation that, during a period of four centuries, it retrograded in material

well-being. Yet this may with truth be said of Scotland. Mr. Innes¹ lays it down as beyond dispute that at the death of Alexander III. in 1285, Scotland was more civilised and more prosperous than at any period of her existence, until the time when she ceased to be a separate kingdom in 1707. Mr. Burton² and Mr. Robertson³ give a picture of Scotland at the death of Alexander in which they bring forward satisfactory proofs of the comparative wealth and civilisation of the country. Mr. Robertson is perhaps rather an enthusiastic writer; but Mr. Burton certainly is not; and the latter forms quite as favourable an estimate of the state of the country as the former. Tradition points to the days of the Alexanders as a time of great well-being. There had been peace with England for more than a hundred years—a blessing never again enjoyed until the Union. The burghs had risen into affluence and importance, eminent over the English burghs—in other respects closely resembling them—by the absence of any trace of thralldom. Berwick, styled by an enthusiastic chronicler “the Alexandria of the North,” held a foremost place among the commercial cities of the island. During the reign of the third Alexander her customs are said to have been farmed for a sum amounting to more than a quarter of the whole revenue of England from similar sources; and the story runs that in the middle of the twelfth century a citizen of Berwick fitted out no fewer than fourteen vessels for the rescue of his wife, who had been carried off by Orkney pirates. The purity of the coinage, and the absence of all mention of voluntary aids, afford strong evi-

¹ “Sketches of Scottish History,” p. 158.

² Vol. ii. pp. 190-198.

³ “Scotland under her Early Kings,” vol. ii. pp. 171-180.

dence of the wealth of the nation. Everything, in short, that we can learn points in the same direction. The castles of that period, and still more the noble ecclesiastical buildings, bear witness to peace and riches. The tariff, which was very complicated, is proof of the luxuries in which the inhabitants were enabled to indulge; and a country which at that date imported such things as pepper, almonds, figs, beaver and sable skins, and which carefully provided for the regulation of hostels or taverns, must have been pretty well-to-do in the world. As Mr. Burton says, in his familiar style, it is not easy, wanting as we do any exact statistics, "to communicate that general impression which the investigator carries with him after rummaging unmethodically among old documents." But on the whole all the facts which can be ascertained lead us to the conclusion that Scotland was a rich, prosperous, and happy country at the close of the thirteenth century.

Very different was the state of Scotland at the close of the seventeenth century. The nobility, far too numerous for the country, were poor place-hunters; the gentry wandering adventurers. There was no agriculture worthy of the name; no trade save what was carried on by petty pedlars. Prices were high; severe scarcities frequent. Slavery, though in theory illegal, was really enforced. All colliers and salt-makers were regarded as predial serfs. Kidnapping was a regular trade. Donacha Dhu in the "Heart of Midlothian" is no exaggeration. There were almost no magistrates—roads only between the large cities—rarely bridges—a greater number of idiots than in any other country—and finally in all times a tenth, in evil days a fifth, of the whole population, begging from door to door, living in the constant commission of

every kind of crime—a state of things so appalling that (as is well known) a regular system of slavery seemed to Fletcher of Saltoun the only efficient remedy for miseries so deeply rooted. In a word, Scotland bought her independence at the cost of inconceivable material wretchedness, the loss of constitutional liberty, the utter disorganisation of society, and the arrest for nearly four hundred years of any real progress in civilisation.

Was it worth the price? Many Scotchmen will be indignant at the very question; but if we look at the matter dispassionately the answer is not easy. We have seen how, while Scotland as a nation gained her independence, the people of Scotland failed to gain their freedom. On the other hand, had Edward's designs succeeded, Scotland would have entered on the enjoyment of those constitutional rights which the English people had even then achieved, and the want of which in after years cost Scotland so dear; her burghers would have shared in the privileges which Simon de Montfort had given to their English brethren, her nobles might have stood by Bohun and Bigod, when they won the *Confirmatio Chartarum* from Edward himself. Again as regards material advancement, she would have enjoyed a continuance of that peace and order which had already raised her so high, while she would have been admitted to a share in that foreign trade which, even in the fourteenth century, enabled the merchants of London to be the hosts of princes. Nor, in Edward's defence, should we forget that he may be well supposed to have foreseen the future—to have been fully persuaded, that for Scotland the only alternative was between union and long years of misery. Situated as Scotland was, and related to England as she was, there was no peace possible to her as an independent nation. Were such

the views of Edward, and we can readily believe them to have been so, he was certainly justified by the event.

Some defensive wars stand out in history the issues of which were momentous in striking disproportion to what at the time appeared to be the interests directly at stake. Such was the resistance of the Greek Republics to Persia—such too the repulse of Athens in the harbour of Syracuse. Such in other times was the struggle of the Lombard Republics against Barbarossa, in which liberty first showed herself to modern Europe. Little of this interest attaches to the Scotch War of Independence. The case of Switzerland approaches it most nearly. But even there a more complete success rewarded virtue, and the effects of the contest were more widely felt. The victors of Sempach gained for their country a more enduring liberty than the victors of Bannockburn; and in a later generation the triumphs of Granson and Morat accomplished the overthrow of the power of Burgundy, and raised Switzerland to a conspicuous place in Europe. The Scottish patriots secured for their country only a protracted struggle; and so far as they brought her into European politics at all, they made her little more than an outlying battle-field between France and England. Yet not on that account do they lose their title to our sympathy. Keeping the results steadily in view, we may doubt the expediency of the resistance; it is impossible to withhold our admiration from the spirit which inspired it. “Not for glory,” wrote the Scotch Parliament to the Pope, “riches, or honours did we fight, but for liberty alone, which no good man abandons but with his life.” If only they had really achieved that liberty for which they endured so much!

Mr. Burton is the first historian, so far as we know, who has brought out the real nature of this struggle. It was not in any sense a struggle for national inde-

pendence by a united Scottish people. In fact, the Scottish nation, as we use the words now, can hardly be said to have had then any existence at all. It was simply the last desperate stand made by the Saxon against the advancing wave of Norman aggression, differing only in point of time and eventual success from the stand made by Hereward or Robin Hood; perhaps even more closely resembling the stand made some hundred years later by the Scottish Celt against the power of the Scottish Lowlander.

The first fruit of the Norman Conquest in Scotland was a steady migration of the Saxon people northwards. "Angles" was the name these refugees bore among the motley races which then inhabited our country, and, taken together with those of the same race previously established there, they probably formed the bulk of the population of all Lowland Scotland except Galloway. These refugees knew the expansive power of the tyranny from which they had fled, and could tell their kinsmen strange and cruel tales of Norman oppression. Every year was widening the difference between the people subject to Norman oppression and the people free from it, and was teaching the latter what they might expect should this heavy yoke be ever laid upon them. While such feelings were gaining ground among the Saxons of Scotland, Norman adventurers came trooping into that country just as they had into England in the days of Edward the Confessor. Welcome at Court, they were not popular throughout the country. At the death of Malcolm III. the prevailing desire for their expulsion had nearly occasioned a change of dynasty. Hence when the dispute as to the crown broke out, the "middle class"—if we can with propriety apply that expression to those times—at all events a strong peasant and burgher class, for the most part of Saxon race, saw their danger.

“ Historical conditions had made the Lowland Scots the very pick of the hardy northern tribes. They were made up of those who had left their homes whenever they found tyranny, or, as it may be otherwise called, a strong government pressing on them. Thither came those who had successively swarmed off before the pressure of Varus, of Charlemagne, of Gorme the Old, and of Harold the Fair-haired. And the last, and perhaps the stoutest and truest of all, were the Saxon peasants who had sought refuge from the iron rule of the Normans among a kindred people still free.”—Vol. ii. p. 281.

It mattered little to these men whether they were ruled by the Norman Edward or by some Norman baron who held estates in Scotland; in any case it was Norman rule with all its varied wickedness which was impending over them. To this they would never submit, and hence the War of Independence. The national instinct, therefore, which has made Wallace the hero of that war, is justified by historical truth. He was the impersonation of the feeling we have described, the very type of the class among whom that feeling was supreme. Bruce, Norman as he was, could never have succeeded had he not broken from his Norman compeers and his Norman King; and we doubt whether he could have succeeded at all had not Wallace gone before, rousing the people by an appeal to the feelings which stirred so strongly within them—fear and hatred of Norman tyranny.

Mr. Burton has not only brought into due prominence the true causes of this war, but he is the first Scottish historian, so far as we know, who has done justice to the motives of Edward. We quote the following comment on the ordinance for the Government of Scotland, issued by Edward in 1305, not only as enforcing powerfully the writer's views, but as a favourable specimen of his style :—

“ The ordinance is not a logical or methodical document.

It mixes up the broadest projects of legislation and administration with mere personal interests and arrangements. But it bears the impression of a high intelligence and a far foresight, mellowed by beneficence and even kindness. The author of it sees that, once brought together, without violence or goadings to national antipathy, the two nations would naturally co-operate and fuse into one compact empire; and no one could be more alive to the mighty destinies that such an empire might have to look to. Had he begun in this spirit, there are many things to render it credible that he might have been successful. *A nationality distinct from and antagonistic to that of the English people had not been made before the death of Alexander III.* The Scots looked to King Edward with a paternal feeling, and had a leaning to the English institutions. Of these they were never afraid; and if they could have felt assured of retaining such freedom of action as these or their own native institutions gave, they would not have been apprehensive of innovation. What they dreaded was the prerogative power, royal and baronial, which the Normans brought by innovation on the original laws and customs of England. In the discussion of the succession, and in the military occupation of the country, these were set in their most offensive shape, face to face with the people of Scotland. Throughout the twelve years' contest, too, they were reminded over and over again of these innovations, with which their neighbours were still at war. They knew that when the King of England found difficulty in gathering a sufficient force for crushing them, it was because he was haggling with his own people about demands for the renewal of the Great Charter and the limitation of the forest laws; and these reiterated demands were nothing but the lamentation and denunciations of the people of England for the rights and liberties of which they deemed they had been robbed."—Vol. ii. pp. 342-3.

In a well-known passage of his history, Lord Macaulay comments on the singular lot of the Scottish Highlander—but a short while ago detested by all civilised Scotland as a barbarian and a thief, now hailed as the true type of Scottish nationality. Mr.

Burton did something towards exploding this romantic folly in his "History of Scotland since the Union." He dealt it a severe blow by his discovery that the picturesque kilt was the invention of an ingenious trooper in General Wade's army. In his present history he has gone yet further, and shown not only that the Highlander was all along alien and hostile to the Scot in the modern sense of the word, but that he did what in him lay to prevent the existence of Scotland altogether. It may be true, though Mr. Burton does not think so, that at least in the beginning of the eleventh century, Scotland as a whole was a Gaelic-speaking country. However this may be, it did not long continue so. The tide of Saxon immigration then began to flow steadily; settled in the lowlands, and, uniting with those of the same race already there, created what we now mean when we speak of the Scottish nation. The Celt driven back to his hills allied himself with the Norman. Edward derived from them important aid, and entered into treaties with their leading chiefs. And this antipathy to the Saxon race lasted throughout the whole of Scottish story. From the days when they assailed Bruce at Loch Awe to the days when they butchered the Covenanters at Bothwell Bridge, the Celts were the pests of Scotland. As Mr. Burton says, we shall fail to gain a true estimate of the history of our country, unless we realise the truth that by the Scottish people the battle of Harlaw was hailed as a not less memorable deliverance than the battle of Bannockburn. It was the spirit of the Saxon middle class which achieved Scottish independence; exhausted by misery and poverty, overmastered by turbulent nobles, it sank down powerless for long years, to be roused again at the second great awakening of national life—the Reformation.

We have dwelt thus long upon the causes and effects of the War of Independence, both because it is a point of Scottish history not perfectly understood, and because Mr. Burton in his account of it has achieved his greatest triumph. Party-spirit could hardly here have influence ; but national prejudice might be, and in many instances has been, very powerful for evil. Of this disturbing, and in these times unworthy element, we find, in Mr. Burton's clear and impartial argument, no trace. His view of the War of Independence is not, of course, absolutely new ; but we have nowhere else seen it urged with the same knowledge and convincing force. Originality is in fact the marked characteristic of the whole book. And while here and there doubtless, especially in the antiquarian discussions, a lurking love of paradox may be discovered, as a rule this originality is not disfigured by a restless craving after novelty. We have sometimes ventured to doubt whether or no the new sources of information recently opened with such profusion to the world, have after all been of much use in advancing historical truth. It seems questionable whether historians really profit by the mass of materials now hurled upon them ; or whether, unable to grasp the whole, they do not too readily embrace the new, neglectful of the old. Men are so prone to over-estimate what they have themselves disinterred, especially if it be in manuscript ; to under-estimate what has been long before the world, especially if it be in print. From this inordinate affectation of novelty Mr. Burton is free. Of all writers we know he is about the last to be led by others ; he forms his own opinions, and expresses them with unmistakable distinctness ; but in the formation of those opinions he is not carried away by a vague admiration of new discoveries, he gives no undue weight to some re-

cently dug-up despatch filled with the gossip of the day, the work of an ambassador, if not, according to Wotton's sarcastic definition, "a man sent abroad to lie for the benefit of his sovereign," at least a man sent to report all manner of tittle-tattle for his benefit and his amusement. Not that Mr. Burton neglects such sources of information. On the contrary, so far as we can judge, he is well acquainted with the results of the most recent investigations; but he rates them at their proper value, and no higher. To this sedateness of judgment it is mainly owing that the philosophy of Scottish history has never been so clearly set forth as in these volumes.

It would, on the other hand, be idle to deny that in some respects the varying aspects of the War of Independence might have found a more congenial chronicler. Mr. Burton possesses but in a slight degree the art of the story-teller; and he wants, if not the feeling of romance, at least the power of expressing the romantic. Nor, though this may be the rashness of ignorance, do we esteem very highly those dissertations on military tactics of which he is extravagantly fond. He is very jealous of the military fame of Wallace, and claims for him the merit of the great discovery of the power of infantry. But then he fails to show us how, if this were so, the battle of Falkirk was lost, and that of Bannockburn won. Still more entirely does he fail to present the noble and picturesque aspects of the contest. To have the heart stirred with that sympathy for courage and resolution, to which no one, English or Scotch, would willingly be dead, and which the desperate struggles of Wallace, the wild adventures of Bruce and the good Lord James so surely evoke, we must after all go back to that chosen friend of boyhood, the "Tales of a Grandfather."

The third volume of Mr. Burton's History is, to our thinking, the least interesting of the four. This is in part attributable to the nature of the subject ; and in part to the writer's inability to make the best of the subject such as it is. Doubtless no theme could be less attractive. The period embraced is from the accession of David Bruce to the death of James v., and the annals of few countries can furnish a more dismal record. The prosperity of the middle class had passed away like a dream. Swept by the storms of English invasion, neither town nor country could afford a secure resting-place for peaceful industry. Trade was no more, agriculture ceased to be worthy of the name ; burgesses and peasantry alike sank into insignificance and misery. The history of Scotland, during this dreary time, is but a record of savage feuds among the nobles themselves, and of an inveterate antagonism between the strength of the nobles and the weakness of the Crown,—

“ A leafless branch her sceptre, and her throne
An icy car indebted to no wheels,
But urged by storms along its slippery way.”

It was the rare felicity of England that, in the early struggles between her nobles and her king, constitutional safeguards were established, which afterwards did good service in many a perilous contest. Scotland had no such fortune. While the nobles of England contended for behoof of those liberties which belong to all classes of men, the nobles of Scotland sought only for license to plunder and oppress. Throughout long years of conflict our sympathies are almost uniformly with the King. For the cause of the Crown was the cause of order and good government, the cause of the nobles was the cause of rapine and turbulence. The mischief began with the wars of the dispossessed barons in the reign of David. These

men, indeed, it were absurd to blame. They were of the same class as the original competitors for the throne of Scotland—brilliant adventurers, without any ties to Scotland, without in fact any ties of nationality at all—and as no one can seriously blame the men of the former generation for offering their homage to Edward in order to preserve their Scotch estates, still less can any charge be justly urged against the men of the second generation seeking to regain the estates of which the War of Independence had deprived them. But with the accession of the House of Stuart this came to an end. Every man in all classes of society had then cast in his lot with one country or the other. The Norman alien had passed from the land, or had changed into the Scottish noble—just as, years before, he had in England. The men of this new order of things were in every sense of the word Scotchmen, and yet for the furtherance of their own selfish and lawless aims they set themselves in opposition to authority, and did what in them lay to obstruct the advancement of the country in civilisation and prosperity. The causes of the extravagant power of the Scotch nobility have been enumerated by Robertson. He ascribes it mainly to the extensive possessions of certain families, to the security afforded to rebellious lords by the defensible nature of the country, to the necessary effect of the English wars in weakening the central authority, to the hereditary jurisdictions which the legislature often but vainly attempted to control, to the habit of entering into bonds for mutual defence, to the long minorities of the Crown, and to the absence of any such counterpoise as was supplied by the peasantry and commercial towns of England. To these we would add another, the readiness of the Scotch nobility to betray their country whenever it suited them

to do so. This, we think, strengthened them in their struggles with the Crown more than all the other causes put together; it was with treason they began their rebellion against James III., it was by the help of treason that they triumphed over the vigour of James V. There are doubtless occasions when, for a great cause and in a desperate emergency, the aid of foreigners may be invoked in a domestic quarrel. Thus the Scotch Protestants looked for help to Elizabeth; thus the French Huguenots sought assistance from the same source; thus the English Opposition urged the Scotch to invade England in 1640; thus they summoned the Dutch in 1688. But no case of this sort can be made out for the Scotch nobles. They transferred their allegiance to England simply that they might gain their individual ends, or at least that they might strengthen their order. And the higher we go the more marked do we find this overbearing turbulence, and this faithlessness to their country. A certain halo of romance surrounds the name of Douglas, legends of chivalrous enterprise were long associated with the memory of the good Lord James, and Otterburn is even yet a word to charm with. Hence the lasting popularity of that House in spite of ambition, unruliness, and cruelty. They would have been very differently regarded had their countrymen known what we now know. Their frequent rebellions made little against them; but no memories of the past could have won forgiveness for their repeated alliances with the English king. With them such treason was no rare occurrence, but, in the words of Mr. Burton, was "consistent with the policy of this House." Very different were the feelings of the commonalty. Mr. Burton has only found one instance in which reference is made to any portion of the people as likely to change their allegiance; and

this was with regard to the Armstrongs, a border race who had little more than a nominal allegiance to change. It is not too much to say that as it was the spirit of the middle class which first won Scottish liberty, so it was the persistency of that class which maintained it. In these early times there is but little to admire among the Scotch nobles. To find aught worthy to be placed beside the great families of England we must come down many years to the time when capacity for affairs, zeal for freedom, and love of toleration became conspicuous in the House of Argyll.

Against a power so great and so unscrupulously wielded, the efforts of the kings were of no avail. James I. took the matter in his own hand; James II. sought the feeble assistance of his Parliament; James V. invoked the more powerful aid of the clergy; but all equally in vain. Robertson, while admitting that the policy of these princes was not attended with success, yet cautions us against the conclusion that it was not dictated by prudence. Doubtless many circumstances combined to frustrate the endeavours of the Crown. Still, an uneasy impression will intrude that those endeavours were not always directed by wisdom, or tempered by moderation. In the records of those old struggles we seem to trace some of the characteristics which marked the Stuart race in times better known—high-mindedness, an impatience of independent opinion and a consequent addiction to favouritism, a love of so-called state-craft which was always shallow, and, if we may use the expression, an impetuous obstinacy. Especially do we remark those hereditary faults of the fated race in James II. and James V.; though in both relieved by fine and noble qualities. The Prince who won the title of “King of the Commons,” must have had no small share of that

urbanity and good nature which in Charles II. so often charmed away the resentment of an injured nation. James I. was the one statesman of the dynasty. He bid fair for success; his rash haste alone caused his failure and death. James IV. was a blustering knight-errant—unable to appreciate, still more unable to follow out, the traditionary policy of his House. James III. was, we suspect, a puzzle to his own time; is certainly one to ours. Mr. Burton frankly admits that he cannot discover whether this Prince was influenced by a love of low society, or by a taste superior to his age—whether of his two chief favourites, one was a low fiddler or the author of the national music of Scotland, the other a mere mason or “the artist to whom we may attribute the revival of architecture in the country.” One thing we do certainly know—that the democratic element in the country supported the accomplished Prince, and was opposed to the brutality of Bell the Cat, and his gang of titled rebels. On the whole, after making every allowance, we cannot feel that any prince of that fated race—not even James I.—was equal to the times in which he lived and the work he had to do. The fitful energy which inspired their assaults on an overgrown nobility seems but feebleness when we think of the subtlety, the sagacity, the unflinching determination with which a man like Louis XI. addressed himself to a similar policy.

Mr. Burton gives us little help towards understanding these stormy times. In fact, as we have already said, the Kingly period is the least effective part of his book. There are, amid much misery, some picturesque features in the story. The wild and shifting scenes in the minority of James II., the gay court which James IV. gathered round him, the adventures of that Prince and of James V. in the

fashion of Haroun Alraschid—these and other such themes might have grown into brilliant pictures beneath the hand of an artist. The pictorial style of writing, however, is not in Mr. Burton's way. But we are certainly disappointed at the absence of anything like a grasp of the epoch as a whole. Failing all attempt to realise for us the life of a period, we are entitled to look for some philosophical conception of its general tendencies, some estimate of its influences on the development of the nation. We find no effort at anything of the kind in Mr. Burton's pages. His narrative from the accession of David to the death of James v. bears, we think, obvious traces of having been executed as an uncongenial task.

After the death of James v. we pass into Robertson's fourth period, when the history of Scotland becomes closely mixed up with the history of the leading nations in Europe. The key to a true understanding of the early part of this epoch is the change which then took place in the relations of Scotland with France and England. Up to this time the main effect of the alliance between France and Scotland had been to the prejudice of the weaker country. Scotland gained but little aid from French auxiliaries in her resistance to England; while the requirement that, in event of a war between France and England, Scotland should be bound to attack the latter, worked somewhat like the alliance between the giant and the dwarf in the fable. On the other hand, the interposition of Scotland had but little effect on the contests of the greater countries. She could sometimes occasion annoyance to England; and her soldiers fought well on more than one French battle-field, but that was all. The English-French wars would probably have come to the same results had Scotland not existed.

As the sixteenth century wore on and the first heavings of the coming convulsion were felt, the insignificance of Scotland became a thing of the past. Throughout his administration Wolsey set before himself, as an object of vital importance, the exclusion from Scotland "of the Duke of Albany and the French faction, and the training of the realm into the amity of England."

The French had many advantages in the struggle. They had possession of the ground: they were the ancient allies of the kingdom. True, they had never been personally popular. Their airs of superiority, their easy faith, their utter disregard of the rights of others, made them disliked in Scotland, just as long afterwards the same qualities made them disliked in Ireland. During the regency of Albany their unpopularity had grown to a height. And even at that time an uneasy feeling began to intrude that the French alliance might possibly prove as dangerous to the independence of Scotland as the enmity of England. The murder of De la Bastie came not only from dislike of the French, but also from a fear of French supremacy. This juncture, therefore, was England's opportunity for carrying out her long-cherished aims. That the opportunity was lost, that the enmity of Scotland was intensified, that England, in consequence of that enmity, became exposed to extreme danger, was altogether owing to the criminal folly of Henry VIII. No English monarch had ever such a chance afforded him of conciliating Scotland. Henry threw the chance away with his eyes open, in obedience to his unruly passion. He had been fully made aware of the right course to pursue. Ahitophel himself could not have given better counsel than George Douglas, brother of the Earl of Angus, gave the English ambassador. He warned him that force would be of no avail—that all

the commonalty, the very boys on the street, nay, the old women with their distaffs, would rise up against a compulsory union with England. But with patience, and gentle means, urged the Scottish noble, much might be done. Let the English monarch preserve peace, let him encourage the intercourse of the two nations, above all let him invite the youth of the Scottish nobility to his magnificent court, and the great end would be attained in time. Henry would listen to no such counsels. During the reign of James v. his scheme for gaining over the Scottish people was to kidnap the Scottish King. After James's death his violence was yet less restrained. He was resolved to marry Mary to his son. There would have been no objection to the match; but Henry insisted on gaining possession of Mary in the meantime. He swore he would "drag the child from the strongest fortress they could hold her in;" and when Suffolk remonstrated on the wildness of such schemes he was dismissed from his lieutenancy. This ended in war, and in such a war as the countries had never before known. The coast of Fife was mercilessly ravaged; Edinburgh burned to the ground; the Border turned into a wilderness; the religious houses destroyed. The instructions given to the leaders of the English troops would be grotesque were it not for the horror of them. They never contemplate conquest, or any lasting result of any kind; their constant burden is to preach devastation, to insist on the infliction of the greatest possible amount of misery. The work on hand could not be intrusted to the men of the borders, accustomed as they were to no gentle warfare. Henry's troops were composed of foreign hirelings—French, Spaniards, Italians, even Greeks, men who would not shrink from any extreme of cruelty. We have no disposition to try by a severe standard the acts of a statesman in pursuance of a

statesmanlike policy. Purism in things political may become weakness. Thus we readily admit that much can be urged in defence of the sternest deeds of Edward. But Henry's position was totally different. Edward set before himself a great and worthy end—the unity of the island, and all his measures were directed to that end. Henry set no end before himself save the gratification of his savage nature. The senseless raids into Scotland which he began, and which culminated in Pinkie, had no better origin than the desire to forget a disappointment in the indulgence of a cruel revenge.

The picture of Henry's dealings with Scotland would not be complete without a word on the murder of Cardinal Beaton. That an English monarch and English statesmen should have stooped to be accomplices, if not the instigators of a treacherous assassination, is a disgrace without parallel in the history of the country. That they did stoop to this ignominy Mr. Tytler has clearly shown, and Mr. Burton sorrowfully admits:—

“These ugly revelations of the State Papers, if they show us one fallen star,¹ show others. The ardent polemic who deems himself the soldier of the Lord in a contest with Satan, demands charitable allowances; he is the desperate combatant in the front ranks of a deadly struggle, who neither asks nor gives quarter. Henry VIII. is an exception to everything. But what shall we say for English statesmen of that age when the spirit of chivalry was mellowing itself into that model of social excellence, the English gentleman? What for Hertford and Sir Ralph Sadler?”

The result of all this might have been foreseen. Hatred of England blazed up more fiercely than ever; the power of France seemed to be strengthened beyond reach of danger. But influences were working on

¹ Wishart himself, who seems to have been cognisant of the plot against the Cardinal.

behalf of England more powerful for good than even the crimes and the folly of Henry for evil. During the minority of Mary the regency of the Queen-mother undid all that Henry had done for France. The former terror of the spread of French influence began to gather strength. In old times it had been the great point in favour of the French alliance that it involved no prospect of subjection. But a change had come ; and now French supremacy—a worse evil than the supremacy of England—seemed impending. The policy of the Queen-mother, dictated by the Guises, kept this feeling alive. The terms of Mary's marriage with the Dauphin were not fully known in Scotland ; but what was known increased the alarm, and what was suspected increased it yet more. The growing spirit of Protestantism set strongly in the same direction. Thus in 1559 we find Kirkcaldy of Grange frankly confessing to Cecil his terror of France, and his desire to make common cause with England in the interest of both countries—especially dwelling on the importance to England of securing the friendship of a people who had heretofore been true to themselves, and would now be true to their new ally. Urged by these various causes the reaction went on, until, at the accession of Mary, the English faction was, we suspect, the stronger of the two. And the misfortunes and crimes of that unhappy Princess brought the long struggle to a decisive issue.

We have little space which we can devote to the endless questions associated with the name of Queen Mary ; there are but two points on which we would dwell for a moment.

History has seldom recorded the doings of worse men than the nobles who surrounded the throne of Mary Stuart. To the turbulence and selfishness of

their ancestors they superadded an audacity of cruelty and treachery peculiarly their own. They had acquired from France a certain hard unscrupulousness which intensified and but thinly covered the natural coarseness of their character. "Their dress," says Mr. Burton, "was that of the camp or stable; they were dirty in person, and abrupt and disrespectful in manner, carrying on their disputes, and even fighting out their fierce quarrels, in the presence of royalty." We have no purpose of tracing the tortuous politics of these men. But in order to judge Mary Stuart fairly we should remember their conduct on one or two crucial occasions. They murdered Rizzio, actuated by no better motive than a savage envy and a desire to bring back from banishment the rebel lords. They murdered Darnley, rather than consent to a divorce, to gratify their lust for revenge, and carry out their political schemes. They acquitted Bothwell, and signed a bond recommending him as the husband of their Queen. They overthrew Bothwell, and deposed the Queen on the ground of this very murder, rousing popular feeling by a picture in which they blasphemously represented the young Prince as invoking the vengeance of Heaven upon a crime in the guilt of which they had fully shared. The revolting "humbug," to use a familiar expression, of this last stroke defies comment. Well may Dr. Lingard declare that "more disgraceful conduct does not sully the page of history." Even if Mary Stuart were in very truth the "murderess of Kirk-o'-Field," our sympathies are rather with her than with men who, under no equal temptation, were at once murderers, traitors, liars, and hypocrites.

Such words do not, of course, describe all the Scotch politicians of the time. But they do describe most of the men who were hostile to Mary;

and their application is of wider extent than some historians would have us believe. Thus the proceedings even of Mr. Froude's "noble and stainless Murray" will not bear a close scrutiny. That he was accessory to the murder of Rizzio is beyond all doubt. He deserted his fellow-conspirators when punishment overtook them, and commissioned Sir James Melville to tell the Queen that he had "dischargit himself unto them that had committed the lait odious crym, and wald promyse Hir Majestie never to haue do with them nor trauell for them." The probabilities are strong that he was aware of the coming fate of Darnley. His leaving Edinburgh the day before the murder is very suspicious—in the words of a witness, "desirous to be away while mischief was going on." The first deposition of Paris convicts him at least of guilty knowledge; and from first to last he never showed the slightest intention of dealing even-handed justice among the murderers. Nor, waiving the imputations of duplicity and ingratitude, as to which there may be a doubt, is his honesty beyond question. Not only did he sell Queen Mary's jewels to Elizabeth, but he actually gave some of them to his own wife. The Regent Morton with great difficulty forced from the lady the spoil with which her husband had enriched her.¹ The judgment of Lord Sussex upon Scotch politicians of that time with whom he came in contact was not less true than severe:—"These parties toss between them the Crown and public affairs of Scotland, and care neither for the mother nor the child (as I think before God), but to serve their own turns."

The Queen's infatuation for Bothwell, as the story is commonly told, is one of the unaccountable things in

¹ Preface to "The Inventories of Queen Mary," by Joseph Robertson, pp. 129, 137.

history. Writers hostile to Mary generally represent him as an unredeemed ruffian, and ascribe her conduct to the lowest impulses which can move a woman. Mr. Burton's theory is widely different and far more natural :—

“ That she should fix her love on him has always been deemed something approaching the unnatural ; but when the circumstances are considered, the conclusion ceases to become so absolutely startling. Mary was evidently one of those to whom at that time a great affair of the heart was a necessity of life—a necessity increased in intensity by her utter disappointment in her last attachment, and the loathing she entertained towards its object. Who then were near her to be the first refuge of her fugitive affections ? None but her own nobles, for she was not in a position to treat with a foreign prince ; and, in looking round the most eminent of these, including Huntly, the brother of a former suitor, Argyle, Athole, and Arran, there were none who, on the ground of rank and position, had claims much higher than Bothwell, unless it might be Arran by reason of his royal blood, and he was already a rejected suitor. In personal qualifications Bothwell was infinitely above them all. He had a genius for command, with a dash of the chivalrous, which made Throckmorton describe him to Queen Elizabeth, in 1560, as “ a glorious,¹ rash, and hazardous young man.” He had lived at the court of France, and thus had over his harder and more effective qualities the polish and accomplishments which were all that Darnley had beside his handsomeness to recommend him. . . . He was at a period of life when the manly attractions do not begin to decline, for he had just passed—if he had passed—his thirtieth year. Tradition says that he was ill-favoured ; but I do not remember any contemporary authority for the assertion, except the cursory sketch of him by Brantome, who may have met him, but does not speak as if he had. The question cannot now be

¹ We cannot help thinking, however, that Mr. Burton mistakes Throckmorton's meaning here. At that time it was common to use Latin and French words in their Latin or French signification, rather than in that which they soon acquired, or even at that time bore in English. Here we think Throckmorton uses *glorious* as equivalent to *gloriosus*.

decided by the eye, for there does not exist a picture which has even the reputation of being his portrait.”¹—Vol. iv. p. 324.

One quality in especial Bothwell had which we may well believe to have done him good service with Mary—unswerving fidelity to his Queen. To others he may have been, in the emphatic words of Randolph, “false and untrue as a devil;” but he was never false to her. As a boy he had fought for her mother against the English when even Huntly and Seaton stood aloof. From the day she herself landed in Scotland her interest seemed to be his only care, her wishes his only law. Surrounded by cruel and treacherous men, opposed by her brother, degraded by her husband, not knowing on whom to rely, a forlorn Queen, an outraged and deserted woman, what wonder that she should lean upon the one man who had never failed her, that she should yield herself up to vigour, audacity, devotion, a readiness to brave any danger, to venture any crime at her behest—that, in her own words, she “would leave her kingdom and dignity, and go as a simple damsel with him?” That he was a profligate was a small matter in a time of universal profligacy; that the nature of the man was hard and low, that he was selfish and brutal and a tyrant, incapable of affection or gratitude, she could only learn, as she did, by the sad experience of her married life.

Mr. Burton evidently concurs with those historians who take the severest view of Mary’s guilt, though he does not expressly state that concurrence, nor discuss the evidence point by point. He gives, however, an

¹ There is a portrait of Bothwell’s head, taken in 1861 from what is shown as his mummy at Faareveille. It is undoubtedly very ugly—“loathsome,” according to Mr. Burton. “But,” as he adds, “who can tell how much of that ugliness may have been contributed by an abode of three centuries in the tomb?”

interesting and telling analysis of the contents of the casket letters ; and as this is incorporated with the text, not, in the usual fashion, thrown into a note or an appendix, we suspect the bearing of those letters will be brought out to many readers with quite a new force. He does not enter specially upon the question whether, assuming Mary to have been aware of Darnley's danger, she can nevertheless be held innocent of actual participation in the murder. But his narrative, as a whole, leads to the conclusion that he thinks her guilty of full foreknowledge of the crime ; and the judicial calmness of his temper, and the homely force of his style, combine to put the case with terrible strength against her.

Readers of the foregoing remarks will be able to form for themselves a general estimate of Mr. Burton's book. A practical man and a rational antiquarian, he has encumbered himself with little beyond the sphere of ordinary historical students. The originality of his views gives a constant interest to his pages ; yet that originality is seldom otherwise than controlled by knowledge and good sense. His love of truth and impartiality are quite exceptional. Thus he studiously avoids a trick introduced by Lord Macaulay, and carried still further by Mr. Froude—the trick of expressing in the historian's own language accounts of events given by others. When Mr. Burton quotes an authority, he gives the exact words ; and slight as this matter may appear, it is wonderful how the opposite habit may, quite unconsciously on the part of the writer, be the means of seriously misleading the reader.

With all these and many other merits, we have seldom seen a work which so strongly brought to our minds Goldsmith's canon of art criticism—"the picture would have been better had the artist taken

more pains." There is a want of method and arrangement which detracts not only from the pleasure the book affords but also from the effect it produces. In the first volume this was perhaps unavoidable ; but in the subsequent volumes the narrative is awkwardly and unnecessarily broken up by the discussion of constitutional and legal questions, and by dissertations on the state of the country. These subjects are doubtless most important ; but they should be treated appropriately—when there is a pause, as it were, in the sequence of the story—not be interspersed with the narrative seemingly at random. The result of Mr. Burton's method, or rather of his want of method, is that neither are these matters adequately discussed, nor does the discussion of them give us a distinct idea of the development of the nation. The effect is at once confusing and irritating. In short, while Mr. Burton thoroughly understands and truly estimates certain periods of Scottish history, he does not seem to us to have grasped it as a whole. This arises, we should fancy, from a natural liking for the topics prominent at some epochs, and a natural distaste for topics prominent at other times ; but whatever the cause, his book is a series of studies on Scottish history, generally sound, always valuable, often strikingly original, rather than the history of Scotland ; the sequence of events is not traced in due proportion throughout its length, the complete story of the nation and the people is not told.

Nor does Mr. Burton possess in any great degree the power of representation. He judges the characters in his drama for the most part truly ; but they are not brought before us as actual men whom we can realise and know ; the heroes of the old time—Bruce and the good Lord James—are but shadows, even Knox and Murray do not live upon the stage.

Neither, as we have before remarked, has he any power of picturesque narration. Not the adventures of war, not the splendours, not the cruel secrets of courts, rouse him to enthusiasm, or stimulate him to any effort at warmth or richness of colouring. And so the pale panorama moves on, not lit up by any brilliant effects, with no groups of life-like figures to give interest and animation to the picture.

Nor can we with justice omit to notice some curious defects in execution. In the first place, the pleasure of reading Mr. Burton's volumes is much lessened by the frequent rudeness of his style. This is no light matter with regard to a book which justly aspires to a high place in historical literature. Mr. Burton has always been somewhat careless in this respect. It is not too much to say that the style of his "Scotland since the Union" is exceedingly bad. In some of his later works—as "The Scot Abroad" and "The Book-Hunter"—an improvement was observable in this respect. We regret to say that the improvement has not been sustained in this his greatest effort. His style here, though never eloquent or beautiful, is sometimes powerful, often vigorous and pointed. But it is deficient in grace and precision, and often very inelegant. He has an especial predilection for long words—a tendency now curiously prevalent in the country of Hume and Robertson. Why should a man say he has "*alighted* upon a book," and call dancing "a graceful cadenced exercise"? and why should the dying gladiator be described as "*ruminat-ing* over the coming vengeance for his fate?"¹ Mr. Burton is peculiarly fond of borrowing the word articulation from the physiologists, and using it, very ungracefully and not very intelligibly, in the peculiar signification which they have attached to it. Thus

¹ Retained in 2d ed. vol. i. p. 9.

he speaks of the inhabitants of Scotland as having, "by a long process of growth and articulation, become consolidated into a European State;" and again, "of a community faintly articulated out of the general chaos;" and, even more absurdly, the Scotch Chroniclers are said "to articulate the battle of Roslin into an eminent victory."¹ It is at least careless writing to say, "there was nothing in Scotland, or for generations to come, like the White Tower;"² it is quite inaccurate to use the words "for all that" as equivalent to "although:"—"For all that the Scots had a rooted prejudice against any precedents coming from England, the revelations made by Henry VIII.'s raid on the monastic houses cannot but have caused a deep impression;"³ and occasionally we see traces of the forced jocularity which sometimes marks the magazine writer. It really gives us no idea to write thus of the struggle of James V. with his nobles: "he went thoroughly to the work; like a school-boy who has got the better of a tyrant master—with the difference that, instead of barrings-out and castings-about of ink-stands and rulers, there were all the miseries of war;"⁴ and it is more elegant and quite as humorous to say that King Duncan married a miller's daughter, as to say that he "made love to a molendinary maiden."⁵ Many similar blemishes might be quoted, but the task is an ungrateful one. A little trouble will enable Mr. Burton to remove them in future editions, and we wish we could persuade him to believe that the value of his work will be greatly enhanced if, in

¹ The last is changed into "exalt;" the first two are unchanged in 2d ed.

² In 2d ed. "to rival" substituted for "life."

³ Retained in 2d ed., vol. iii. p. 307.

⁴ Retained 2d ed., vol. iii. p. 140.

⁵ Corrected in 2d ed. into "daughter."

what remains of it, he will condescend to study elegance and simplicity of expression.

A more serious matter, however, than this of style is Mr. Burton's frequent and exceeding inaccuracy, especially in genealogical points. As an instance of this we take his account of the family of Comyn, the competitor for the Crown :—

“Devergoil had a sister, Marjory, married to John Comyn, Lord of Badenoch. He also had princely possessions; and his race, of which there were many branches, formed altogether the most powerful baronial family in Scotland. He boasted too, but in a shape that has not distinctly come down to us, of descent from Donald Bain, a son of the gracious Duncan, who for a brief space occupied the throne. Comyn was nominally a claimant for the crown. Had there been a scuffle for the succession, his chances of success might have been strong. But in the decorous and precise Court of the Lord Superior, he could plead nothing to the point but his descent from the granddaughter of Earl David, and this brought him immediately behind Baliol, as the descendant of her elder sister. His claim, then, may be considered among the others taken out of the arena of the contest, and we must go back to Earl David to see where Baliol was to find his real competitor. . . .”—Vol. ii. p. 216.

“Comyn the competitor, as we have seen, had a claim which could only stand after Baliol's, since they were descended of two sisters, and Comyn of the younger. Baliol was now out of the field, not merely by the feudal proceedings taken against him by King Edward, but by a voluntary resignation of his right of inheritance. Supposing this to be effectual, and no one gainsaid it, it removed the line of succession to which that of the Comyns was subsidiary. *But further, Comyn the competitor married a sister of Baliol, and their son, called the Red Comyn, had thus an additional claim to represent the rights of the deposed King.* Then there was a mysterious tradition of his descent from Donald Bain of the old royal line; and though this went for nothing before the Court of the Lord Superior, it might avail with a people eager to be led against their enemy and craving for a leader.

Here, then, altogether, Bruce had a formidable rival."—Vol. ii. pp. 346-7.¹

Now all this is quite wrong, and some of it is self-contradictory. Where can Mr. Burton find authority for the statement that Comyn, in the Court of the Superior, pleaded only his descent from the granddaughter of Earl David? In the first place, it is quite certain he did not plead this at all, for in Rymer's *Fœdera* the pleadings are carefully given, and Comyn's only claim is in respect of his ancestor Donald Bain. In the second place, according even to Mr. Burton's own account, he could not have pleaded his *descent* from the granddaughter of Earl David, because, if he had anything to do with such a lady, he was her husband—having, as Mr. Burton says in the very first sentence above quoted, *married* Marjory the sister of Devergoil. In the third place, even this marriage connection is quite incorrect. Devergoil, or Devorguilla, granddaughter of Earl David, the wife of Baliol, and the mother of John Baliol who claimed the crown, had certainly no sister who married Comyn. The lady whom the Black Comyn did marry was Marjory Baliol, the sister, not of John Baliol's mother, as Mr. Burton says, but of John Baliol himself; and the Red Comyn, their son, whom Bruce stabbed at Dumfries, succeeded through this lady to the rights of the Baliol family, John Baliol, her brother, having renounced all his own claims. And, curiously enough, in the sentence we have put in italics, Mr. Burton has stated this true and only connection of the Comyns with the house of Baliol as an *additional* ground for their claim to the crown. In short, there is here an inextricable complication of blunders; and Mr. Burton is not more fortunate in dealing with the genealogy of other great families. He errs equally, for example, with

¹ Both retained in 2d ed., vol. ii. pp. 129, 236.

regard to the Douglasses; and wilfully, as it were, makes that error of importance by basing on it a theory to account for the power of the House. He holds that the rivalry of the Douglasses with the Royal House was in some sort owing to their claiming right to the crown through the Baliol race; because "Archibald Douglas, the brother and heir of the good Lord James, married Dornagilla, the sister of the Red Comyn, and the daughter of Baliol's sister."¹

Surely Mr. Burton cannot be unaware that this Dornagilla is the Mrs. Harris of Scotch history—long since banished to the realms of fable by an antiquary so celebrated as Mr. Riddell.² And, even had she ever existed, she could not have brought the Baliol claims to the later Lords of Douglas; for they were descended, not from Archibald Douglas, but from the good Lord James himself—and illegitimately.³ Many other mistakes, we regret to say—some trifling, others not unimportant—occur in Mr. Burton's pages. Thus in his account of Harlaw, he confuses Donald of the Isles with his son; he imputes the cruelties which sullied the English triumph at Verneuil to Henry v., who had died two years before the battle was fought;⁴ he gives Cardross on the Firth of Forth, instead of Cardross on the Clyde, as the scene of the death of Bruce.⁵ Nor can we feel quite the reliance we could wish on Mr. Burton's scholarship. We shall not refer to the celebrated false construction of "peopling the earth," further than to remark that errors of the press in the classical quotations are more frequent than

¹ Altered in 2d ed., vol. ii. p. 418, into "reputed to be," etc.

² See "Tracts Legal and Historical," by John Riddell. Ed. 1835, p. 216.

³ This has been already pointed out by the high authority of Mr. George Burnett, Lyon-King-at-Arms, in "Macmillan's Magazine" for June.

⁴ Retained 2d ed., vol. ii. p. 398. This and perhaps the next only looseness of expression; but certainly very great looseness.

⁵ Corrected in 2d ed.

they should be ; but we doubt Loidis as the Latin for Leeds,¹ and we cannot comprehend how Tacitus can be spoken of as pointing a moral for the benefit of "the Court of Tiberius."² Lastly, Mr. Burton's views on mythology, as shown in the contrast he seeks to draw between the northern and the classical mythologies, betray at least indifference to the latest results of scholarship in the highest sense of the word.

These may seem slight matters. Yet they are not really so when we apply the standard by which such a work as Mr. Burton's may justly claim to be judged. They cannot arise in Mr. Burton's case from want of knowledge ; they come rather, we suspect, from an impatience of detail, and perhaps in some measure from haste. But howsoever they come, they cannot fail to injure an historian's reputation for that greatest of historic virtues—accuracy. And we regret this the more because it will give a vantage-ground of attack to the assailants who will be stirred up against Mr. Burton by his wholesome iconoclastic tendencies.

Our limits prevent us from entering on the second great point of Scotch history—the Reformation. And we regret this the less because up to the period at which Mr. Burton ends his narrative the Scotch Reformation had not assumed those distinctive features which give it a peculiar interest. Mr. Burton has created some surprise by saying, in his calm unenthusiastic way, that the Reformation in Scotland took its course not so much from the religious opinions of the people as from external political convulsions.

¹ Not that this is a mistake in scholarship properly speaking, but it is at least unsafe to rest an argument on such nomenclature, as Mr. Burton does, vol. ii. p. 64, note. In the *Acta Sanctorum* (March 6, 36) in the life of St. Cadroe, we find *Loida* probably used as meaning Leeds ; but then we find Simeon of Durham using the same word *Loyda* as not less certainly meaning Lothian. Mr. Burton has, we suspect, taken *Loidis*, a little too hastily, from Bede, *Hist. Eccles.* ii. 14, and iii. 24.

² Corrected in 2d ed.

But however startling this may be to certain national prejudices there can be no doubt that up to 1560 at all events it is perfectly true. On the 25th of August in that year Calvinism was established by Parliament, but what life should be breathed into those legislative Acts was to be determined by the future. So far the struggle of the creeds had been little more than a contest between French and English influence. In after days opposition raised a fierce popular spirit, and gave to the Scotch Reformation its peculiar characteristics as a religious movement. But these matters are all to come.

We look forward to Mr. Burton's future volumes with great interest. In many respects the subjects which lie before him are better suited to his powers than those he has here dealt with. We may fairly look for a fuller and sounder estimate of the Scottish Constitution before the Union than we have in the nine or ten pages at present thought equal to the subject. Some account also of the sources, and an historical sketch of the growth of Scotch law, might come with propriety from a Scotch lawyer. And in the more modern aspects of character with which he will have to deal, and in the expanding strength of public opinion, which he has already shown himself so acute to detect and wise to appreciate, Mr. Burton will be quite at home. It would be idle to say that he has reached the highest standard of historical excellence. But he has enriched historical literature with a valuable and instructive work, and we anticipate, with confidence, that the two remaining volumes in which he promises to complete it, will surpass even the varied merits of those now before us.

BURTON'S HISTORY OF SCOTLAND.¹

THE former volumes of Mr. Burton's History closed with the imprisonment of Queen Mary in Lochleven Castle. The explosion of Kirk-o'-Field had blown into air all those far-reaching schemes for the elevation of Mary to the throne of Elizabeth, and the restoration throughout the island of the old faith, which had dictated the policy of the Catholics, and had taken firm hold of many who, though nominally Protestants, were above all things enthusiastic Scotchmen. The name of the Scottish Queen was no longer a name to charm with: a murderess and adulteress could not be the champion of a great religious reaction. "The spirits of the Catholics are broken," writes De Silva, quoted by Mr. Froude. "Should it turn out that she is guilty, her party in England is gone; and by her means there is no more chance of a restoration of religion." True, these schemes revived at a later time; but henceforward they were vain dreams. They lured to destruction the subtle Lethington; they won the chivalrous Grange from his loyalty; but they never came within the sphere of human probabilities. Varied as were the phases of the long game which succeeded, we can now see plainly that,

¹ "The History of Scotland." Vols. v., vi., vii. By John Hill Burton. Edinburgh: 1870.—[Reprinted from the "Edinburgh Review," No. 273. July 1871.]

after the crime of Kirk-o'-Field, Mary never had a chance of winning the great stake which from the first she had set herself to play for.

The after-fortunes of Mary in her native country Mr. Burton relates with brief distinctness. The romantic events of the escape from Lochleven—the muster at Hamilton—the overthrow of Langside, find in him no very congenial chronicler. But he dwells with characteristic minuteness on every aspect of the imprisonment; he specifies the nature of the stone with which Lochleven Castle was built: he describes the advantages of its situation as regards supplies of mutton, fish, and game; he altogether disbelieves that the limited accommodation of the castle could have allowed of the birth, concealment, and removal of a daughter—the result of the alliance with Bothwell. He thinks there is no evidence that Mary was treated with harshness. But the completeness of her seclusion points to a very close watchfulness; while the fact that two daughters of the lady of the castle were her bedfellows—which Mr. Burton somewhat mysteriously explains as required by “the hard rules of political necessity”—shows that her life must have been exceedingly uncomfortable. But we are without any real knowledge on these matters, and must rest content with what the insight of genius has revealed to us in the pages of “The Abbot.”

After the impetuosity of her adherents had rushed upon defeat at Langside, nothing remained for Mary but flight. France or England was an obvious alternative: Mr. Burton starts an interesting speculation as to the results of her having sought a refuge in Spain:—

“Could she have fled to Spain, a scene of another kind might have opened. There she would have found a monarch who, if it be possible, was more earnest than herself in reverence for the doctrine, that the one object, both

for the sake of this world and the next, to which a Christian sovereign should be devoted, was the restoration of the old Church to its power and splendour. The possibilities that such a conjuncture might have opened are so interesting that they can hardly be passed in silence. Might not an impulse have been given to his sluggish nature, so that the great blow he was to strike in England might have been earlier and more aptly timed? There was no room, it is true, for the revival of the old matrimonial project between Mary and Don Carlos, which Catherine of Medici had wrought so hard to defeat. The poor mad youth was at the crisis of his tragic fate. It was about six weeks after her escape that, if we are to accept what we are now told, his throat was cut in the Escorial, not by assassins, but by the ministers of Spanish justice. But presently there was to be another opening. Within six months after this crisis in Mary's fate, her sister-in-law, Isabella of France, the Queen of Spain, died. She also became the tragic heroine of a romance of love and crime; but history gradually dropped the dark suspicions on her name, and left them to the world of fiction. Though the daughter of the terrible Catherine, she left the reputation of a faithful wife and a gentle queen. Among those who cherished the memory of her virtues, they were enhanced by the fervency with which on her death-bed she expressed her thankfulness in being the partner of one whom no deceptious frailties of mercy or remorse had ever checked in the sacred task of extirpating heresy. To such views Mary was one who would have given support quite as sincere and far more active. Indeed, just before the Queen of Spain's death, the two had been holding some genial correspondence, in which the restoration of the Church was put foremost of human duties. At that time Philip was not yet forty-two years old, and though he had been three times married, the son destined to succeed him had not yet been born. If it be said that these speculations on the possible consequences of events which never came to pass are away from the purpose of history, it may be pleaded that they deserve a passing notice, since they were contingencies which both the thinking and the acting men of the time must have studied. There was nothing in the

possible future of Mary's relations with France and Spain that did not then affect the present in Scotland and in England too."—Vol. v. pp. 120, 121.

Mary Stuart fled to England in May 1568. From that time till the fall of Edinburgh Castle in May 1573, her fortunes were closely united with those of her native country. At any period during these five years the future of Scotland might have taken almost any shape, according as Elizabeth had dealt with her royal captive. Hardly less did the peace and security of England seem, at the time, to depend on the same decision. No wonder, therefore, that the decision was anxiously watched for then, and has been eagerly canvassed since. An enthusiastic school of recent English writers maintains that Elizabeth, in her dealings with Mary, acted not only with wisdom, but with justice. We are old-fashioned enough to demur on both points. The tragic end is defensible on many grounds, but its defensibility seems to us the exact measure of the guilt of the earlier policy. The necessity for the execution is the deepest condemnation of the long captivity. But, irrespective of this consideration, it is vain to dispute that Mary's detention in England was in violation of all public or municipal law. Mr. Hallam says, in his calm, impartial style, which in this controversy gives the reader such a sense of relief, that "policy was supposed, as frequently happens, to indicate a measure absolutely repugnant to justice, that of detaining her in perpetual custody. Whether this policy had no other fault than its want of justice may reasonably be called in question." We cannot, however, concur with Mr. Hallam in his further remark, that "to have restored her by force of arms, or by a mediation which would certainly have been effectual, to the throne which she had compulsorily abdicated, was the most generous, and would

perhaps have turned out the most judicious proceeding." This course, doubtless the most generous, might have proved the most judicious, but for the incurable duplicity of Mary and her supporters. Had they been only moderately honest, or had they succeeded in concealing their dishonesty! Their promises indeed were fair, but there was no thought of keeping them. Had Mary been restored, the old game would have been played over again—the revival of Popery, the assaults on Elizabeth's throne. That this would have been so was proved to the Ministers of Elizabeth under the hands of the plotters themselves. Therefore she could say with truth, that "to set this person at liberty and restore her to her throne would be an act of dangerous folly which no indifferent person should in conscience require." The wisest course, as it seems to us, would have been the impartial neutrality of sending her to France. There the hatred of the Queen-mother would have kept her powerless and harmless. Had Elizabeth committed Mary to the keeping of Catherine de Medicis, and recognised James as her successor on the throne of England, her reign would have been undisturbed by many a danger, and her memory would be without its deepest stain. The course she took was at once the least honourable and the most perilous. Mary, in England, was the centre of all mischief. The long injury of her imprisonment made the world forget her crimes: the old schemes were renewed; to enthusiastic natures any plot became holy which had for its object the triumph of the true faith and the restoration of freedom to the captive. Elizabeth owed her safety solely to the jealousies between France and Spain. Not only were these powers unable to co-operate even for the humiliation of England, neither could resist the temptation of thwarting any promising plan devised by the other.

While the weakness and prejudices of Elizabeth were thus injurious to herself, they brought bitter disaster upon Scotland. The Queen's party revived : Murray, the one man able to control Scotland, was assassinated ; the Catholic nobles, believing in the restoration of Mary, took heart ; the leading Protestants, dazzled by the same mirage, deserted the good cause. But what changed Maitland of Lethington, and, through him, Grange, into the most zealous of queensmen, has never, perhaps, been satisfactorily explained. Mr. Froude's theory is that Maitland was deluded by the vain hope of winning for Mary the English crown. Mr. Burton has no particular theory about the matter ; and, in default of one, falls back upon an illustration. "Lethington took his inspiration from the lamp. Among the common politicians of the day he was like an alchymist acquainted with formidable chemical combinations unknown to others, and not so well at his own command but that the result was often explosive and disastrous." Besides being led away by his own over-subtle fancies, Maitland mistook the position and misread the character of Elizabeth. Her weakness and fickleness, and the duplicity which is the consequence of weakness and fickleness, were past even his finding out. Maitland, Argyll, and Grange were all the victims of her hesitation, or the dupes of her cunning.

The King's party, and with it the cause of the Reformation, was for a time in evil case. Morton upheld it alone. He was the strength of the party, and the true ruler of Scotland, while power was nominally intrusted to the feeble hands of Lennox and Mar. History has done but scant justice to this man. Mr. Froude somewhere calls him "an unprincipled scoundrel ;" and even the cooler judgment of Mr. Burton seems warped against him. We cannot

concur in this severity of condemnation. Unprincipled, in private life, Morton was. Unhappy in his marriage, he was a libertine in his amours. But profligacy was a small matter in days of universal profligacy ; *that* Morton had in common with many who were without his excuse. Unprincipled in public life he was not. True, his principles were purely political ; for the religious interests at stake he cared as little perhaps as Lethington himself. But such as they were he stuck to them ; he chose them early, he adhered to them always, he carried them to final triumph, and he was put to death because of them. The nature of the man was hard and stern ; he was feared and obeyed, but never loved, even by those of his own party. In the crisis of his fate, when done to death by the wretched courtiers of James, the Presbyterians whom he had saved would not move on his behalf. But now at least we may estimate fairly the merits of a statesman, undisturbed by doubts as to the piety of his motives and the purity of his life. His courage, vigour, and tenacity of purpose compel our respect ; his fidelity to his party and his services to freedom demand our gratitude. Abandoned by his old allies, Morton found support in an unlooked-for quarter. For the second time in Scotland's story the middle class arose and saved their country. As we pointed out in our notice of Mr. Burton's former volumes, it was this class which brought the War of Independence to a successful issue. During the kingly period they disappear from the stage : they were exhausted with misery, and the wretched turmoils which then desolated the land were nothing to them. But now they were roused by stimulants of terrible potency. The pure religion which they had learned to cherish was to be torn from them ; a Popish adulteress was again to reign ; the Spaniards, led by

the dreaded Alva, were about to land on their shores ; and in such straits their natural leaders were deserting them. But the more desperate the danger the higher swelled the national spirit. And the preaching of Knox, old though he was, and broken, and unable to reach the pulpit without aid, could yet stir the heart of Scotland "like ten thousand trumpets." Blamed for his attacks on Mary, he thus vindicates his speech : "That I have called her ane obstinate idolatrice, ane that consented to the murther of her awn husband, and ane that has committed whoredom and villanous adultery, I gladly grant and never minds to deny ; but railing and sedition they are never able to prove in me, till they first compel Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, St. Paul, and others, to recant, of whom I have learned plainly and boldly to call wickedness by its own terms—a fig a fig, and a spade a spade." The nation was roused by his denunciations ; it was he who at this supreme crisis turned to foolishness the wisdom of Lethington and the chivalry of Grange, and called to life the Commons of Scotland ; and the Commons of Scotland saved the liberties and religion of their own country, and in so doing saved also the liberties and religion of England.

This rise of the Commons is the one attractive feature in that cruel time. Scotland became the theatre of a desolating civil war. She had known many miseries of strife and rebellion ; but never anything like this. No quarter was given on either side. No sex or age was spared—women and children were tossed living into their burning houses. But the issue, failing the arrival of Alva, was never doubtful. Knox foresaw surely "of the castle of Edinburgh, that it should rise like a sandglass, and spew out the captain with shame."

Two events hurried on the end—the massacre of

St. Bartholomew and the conspiracy of Ridolfi. The great crime of the court of Paris produced more immediate and more important effects in Scotland than in any other country. The tendency then gaining ground among the Commons towards the sternest forms of Presbyterianism was quickened by sympathy with the Huguenots, from whom that Presbyterianism had been derived. The nation was transported with a rage and horror before which even the Catholic nobles quailed. Then came the detection of Ridolfi, revealing to Elizabeth something of her danger, laying bare before Cecil the Catholic plottings and the complicity of Lethington. The title of James was recognised. The Pacification of Perth followed ; and there remained only the defenders of the castle of Edinburgh—fighting with the desperate fidelity of renegades. Even at the last Elizabeth hesitated ; but Morton—unlike Lennox and Mar—would not be trifled with. Accordingly, English cannon were sent round to Leith ; the castle fell, and there was peace in the land.

This period of civil war possesses, as we have said, a peculiar interest and importance, because then the Scottish middle class made itself felt as a power in the country, and won a position which it never afterwards lost. It possesses, too, an interest of a different kind in that, before the issue was determined, the man who had called that middle class into political existence closed, not unworthily, his eventful career. The last days of Knox present a noble picture of faithfulness and courage enduring to the end. Worn with age ; beset with dangers ; his life threatened by Grange himself, the trusted friend of old days ; counselled to silence by timid allies ; deserted even by his ecclesiastical brethren ; he would not be slack in the cause of his country and his God. Driven from

Edinburgh, his voice woke the land from distant St. Andrews; but his work was done, and he returned to Edinburgh to die. His last act on earth was one of mercy. He sent David Lindsay, a minister, to the castle, beseeching the defenders to give rest to the country, and to save themselves from inevitable destruction. Grange was moved by such a message from one whom he had loved and honoured; it drew but a scurril jest from the harder Lethington. "Well," said the dying man, when the failure of his errand was reported to him, "I have been earnest with my God anent they twa men. For the one, I am sorry that sa should befall him; yet God assures me there is mercy for his soul. For the other, I have na warrant that ever he shall be well."

For all this, as indeed for the whole life of Knox, Mr. Burton, we regret to state, has no fitter words than "egotism," and "rancour," and "arrogance." Throughout his history he is curiously unjust to the great Reformer. To some extent this is intelligible. Himself utterly without enthusiasm, Mr. Burton cannot discern the merits, still less make allowance for the failings, of noble and enthusiastic natures. But it is less easy to understand why Mr. Burton should have taken so little pains to show in their true light the undoubted services rendered by Knox to his country—to education, for example; to civil, if not to religious, liberty. He writes of him throughout with a grudge and reserve of praise which seems to spring from a genuine inability to estimate fairly the position and character of the man. The reality of Knox's character has, we think, been obscured hardly less by the zeal of friends than by the malignity of enemies. To us his temperament seems to have been the very reverse of that of a fanatic. It was genial, liberal, kindly. True, he was enthusiastic—zealous

even to slaying. He was intolerant, too, of Popery and tyranny; and fortunately for him and for us, Popery and tyranny were then combined, at least in Scotland, with foolishness and crime. But enthusiasm is not fanaticism: intolerance does not always spring from mere bigotry. The cause of Protestantism and freedom against Mary, Philip, Alva, and the Pope, was a cause which men had to fight hard for; and which, failing success, they would have had to die for. In such a struggle "enlightened principles" of any kind are not likely to find place. Intolerance is the inevitable vice of such a time; and Knox's intolerance took its vehemence from a fiery temperament, heated by his keen perception of the dangers to which truth and freedom were then exposed. Two great political evils throw their shadow over all Scottish history—fierceness of faction and want of public spirit. Knox was fierce enough, and, in a sense, factious; but he was animated by an unselfish zeal for the public good, shared in by few Scotchmen of his own or any other time. Our readers, we are sure, will forgive us if we recall to their recollection Mr. Froude's estimate of the greatest of Scotchmen:—

"The time has come when English history may do justice to one but for whom the Reformation would have been overthrown among ourselves; for the spirit which Knox created saved Scotland; and if Scotland had been Catholic again, neither the wisdom of Elizabeth's ministers, nor the teaching of her bishops, nor her own chicaneries, would have preserved England from revolution. His was the voice which taught the peasant of the Lothians that he was a free man, the equal in the sight of God with the proudest peer or prelate that had trampled on his forefathers. He was the one antagonist whom Mary Stuart could not soften nor Maitland deceive; he it was that raised the poor Commons of his country into a stern and rugged people, who might be hard, narrow, superstitious, and fanatical; but who, nevertheless,

were men whom neither king, noble, nor priest could force again to submit to tyranny. And his reward has been the ingratitude of those who should most have done honour to his memory. . . . Even his very bones have been flung out of their resting-place, or none can tell where they are laid ; and yet but for him Mary Stuart would have bent Scotland to her purpose, and Scotland would have been the lever with which France and Spain would have worked on England. But for Knox and Burghley—those two, but not one without the other—Elizabeth would have been flung from off her throne, or have gone back into the Egypt to which she was too often casting wistful eyes.”¹

With the overthrow of the Queen's party ends the interest of Scotch secular history until the union of the crowns. There remains much intrigue and turmoil—raids of Ruthven, Gowrie plots, and frequent outbreaks of feudal savagery ; but little to amuse and nothing to instruct. The character of James arrests attention for a moment—in delineating which, Mr. Burton has laboured with evident pains and remarkable success. He displayed from the first all those unkingly qualities which afterwards excited the indignation and contempt of England. We remark the same timidity, the same feeble obstinacy, the same shallow deceit which he thought kingcraft, the same love of favourites, the same strange susceptibility to the attractions of male beauty. Aubigné, Arran, and Gray were the forerunners of Carr and Villiers. Mr. Burton accounts for this last peculiarity by the following ingenious theory :—

“The king, just growing into manhood, was acquiring that offensive ugliness which even court painters could not help revealing if they produced what could be recognised as a portrait. The ugliness was offensive, because it had none of those qualities which give an interest, and sometimes even a dignity, to ugly faces—as intellect, firmness, or even

¹ *History*, vol. x. pp. 456, 457.

sternness. But he delighted in having handsome men about him, and good looks were a sure passport to his favour. This weakness seems to have come of the same peculiarity of nature, unaccountable on any reasoning from cause and effect, which makes unseemly people take delight in the fine clothing and brilliant jewellery which only draw attention to their defects."—Vol. v. p. 497.

We have no inclination to dwell on those dreary times, and gladly turn to a more inviting theme—the progress of the Scottish Reformation, and the development of Scottish Presbyterianism. It is in this branch of his subject that Mr. Burton has achieved his greatest success. Here his impartiality, amounting almost to indifference, stands him in good stead. For when we come to deal with the struggles, in the seventeenth century, between Presbyterianism and Episcopacy, we tread on embers beneath which the fires are yet living. The passions of men are always excited by religious controversy; and few controversies have raged more furiously or for a victory more trivial than the rival claims of Episcopalians and Presbyterians to be recognised as the true Church of the Scottish Reformation. The respective disputants have, of course, looked at one side of the shield only. Mr. Burton's even-handed justice will be distasteful to both, in exact proportion as it will be prized by the lover of historical truth. It is not too much to say that the best ecclesiastical history of Scotland yet written is to be found in Mr. Burton's pages.

Mr. Froude's favourite source of historical knowledge, the Statute-book, does not greatly aid us towards a true understanding of this matter. Popery was overthrown in 1560, and it was thought wise to confirm this great work in 1567. After the latter date a ritual seems to have prevailed, carefully cleared of any leanings towards Popish doctrine, certain musical

observances, and other things which subsequently came to be regarded as abominations, such as the sponsors in the Anglican rite of baptism. These Reformation Acts, if we may so call them, made no special attack on the Episcopal hierarchy. On the contrary, the Estates expressly refused their approval to the Huguenot system, in the shape of the First Book of Discipline; and, in a statute passed for the suppression of Popery in 1572, it is declared that the Kirk is to act through "lawful archbishops, bishops, superintendents, and ministers and readers." But in 1580 a different spirit appears. In the Assembly of that year "the office of ane bishop" is declared to have "no sure warrant, authority, or good ground out of the Scripture of God, but to be brought in by folly and corruption;" and is therefore abolished. In 1592 we find the Estates establishing the Presbyterian polity in language unequivocal and distinct; in 1597 we find them recognising "bishops, abbots, and other prelates;" in 1606 they formally restore the order of bishops "to their ancient and accustomed honours, dignities, prerogatives, privileges, livings, lands, etc.;" in 1640 they overthrew the whole Episcopal hierarchy, and declared the Covenant the law of the land. All this is not a little perplexing; but if, turning from the dry bones of statutes, we study the changeful life of Scotland during that epoch, we shall find the history of her Church become intelligible. The high-born Reformers of the early period cared little for the spiritual aspects of the movement which they led. What they really valued, what made the new faith truly precious in their sight, was their possession of the Church lands. "If they can have the kirk lands," wrote Knox of them, "to be annexed to their houses, they appear to take no more care of the instruction of the ignorant, and of the feeding of the flock of Jesus

Christ, than ever did the Papists whom we have condemned, and yet are worse ourselves in that behalf." Certainly they had no special aversion to prelates or prayer-books. Knox himself was no hater of Episcopacy. On the contrary, he dealt with the proper ordering of the office of a bishop as a matter of importance in the economy of the Church. Had the nobles been steadfast to Protestantism, and gone along with his scheme of education, the bishops would have moved him little. At the very first, in 1559-60, had the Queen Regent shown good faith, and not attempted to put down the new religion with French money and French troops, the Reformation, guided by moderate men, might have assumed a different character. Mary bettered her instruction. The result was twofold: Scotland was thrown, politically, into the arms of England; a more fiery zeal was breathed into the new Dissent. Knox was driven to extremes by the defection or indifference of the Protestant leaders, by their active opposition to his scheme of education, and by the reaction in favour of Mary and Popery. Thus the defence of freedom and religion fell into the hands of the commonalty; and from five years of civil war there emerged a stern creed and a democratic Church. The horrors of St. Bartholomew, the terror of the Armada, worked in the same direction; as did also the preference for Episcopacy early evinced by James. From all which causes it came about that, at the union of the crowns, the current of national feeling set steadily towards democratic Presbyterianism, with, it may be, a reactionary eddy here and there at the side, but without effect on the main flow of the stream. We have passed from the comparative liberality of Knox to the harder and narrower, if more logical, doctrine of Melville.

When James succeeded to his great inheritance, an English courtier, with the natural curiosity of one receiving a new master, desired to learn the king's disposition from a Scottish peer. "Saw ye ever," was the reply of the noble humourist, "saw ye ever a jack ape? Because if I hold him in my hands, I can make him bite you; if you hold him in yours, you can make him bite me." James was no sooner in English hands than he began to bite Scotland, and especially the Scottish Church. He hated, with a manifold hatred, both the Presbyterian system and the Presbyterian clergy. The Episcopal polity adapted itself more readily to the political theories of Filmer; the blasphemous adulation of English prelates was more grateful to royal ears than the rude rebukes of Melville. The Hampton Court Conference, unimportant in its issues, revealed the temper and purposes of the king. Certain of the clergy were convicted of high treason for upholding the independence of ecclesiastical assemblies; the two Melvilles, and six of the brethren, who had been tempted to London by specious promises of patient hearing and fair judgment, were banished or confined to particular localities in Scotland, because they would not acquiesce in "Papist ceremonies, and an unchristian hierarchy." Finally, Episcopacy was formally restored in 1606. But it was easier to create bishops than to endow them; the nobles refused to relinquish the spoils of the Church; it was found impossible to restore to holy uses even the fragment of the old ecclesiastical wealth which had been vested in the Crown by the Act of Annexation. Mr. Burton gives an amusing account of the piteous and repeated wailings of the new bishops on the score of their poverty. But it was all in vain. The one fact which "we have to carry out of the whole selfish and

cunning struggle is the determined pertinacity of the hold maintained by powerful men in Scotland over the revenues of the Old Church." These men were the worthy predecessors of the same class which supports Episcopacy in Scotland in such a niggardly fashion now.

James's next move was more decided. The celebrated Five Articles were passed in a packed Assembly held at Perth in the year 1618. They were ratified by the Estates in 1621, and when the Commissioner rose to touch them with the sceptre, according to the ancient fashion of the realm, the displeasure of Heaven was manifested by lightnings and thunders, and "an extraordinary great darkness." To us, looking back on these matters with the cultivated indifference of the present day, it seems strange that the provisions of those articles should have excited so much commotion even upon earth. They enjoined the attitude of kneeling at the Communion, permitted private baptism on necessary cause, insisted on the rite of confirmation, and required the due observation of holy days. What was there in all this to give such dire offence?

"To see how deep these simple rules of ecclesiastical ceremonial or ritualism cut into the prejudices of a large portion of the community, it may be proper to glance back at some conditions peculiar to the Reformation in Scotland. The stranger in a Scotch Presbyterian church generally remarks that the form of service seems to have no other ruling principle save that of antagonism to the forms of all the churches which have adhered, in whole or in part, to the traditional ceremonial of the Church of the middle ages. Where in these the suppliant humbly kneels in prayer, in Scotland he stands straight up, with his head erect, as if he would look the Giver of all in the face, and demand what he prays for. Then in the celebration of the sacrament of the Atonement, while in other churches the ceremonies are

adjusted so that the communicant shall appear as a suppliant humbly receiving the great boon at the hands of those authorised to render it, in the ministration of the Lord's table in Scotland, scrupulous care seems to have been taken to give the whole as much as possible the aspect of a miscellaneous party assembled for convivial enjoyment round a hospitable board."—Vol. vi. p. 323.

In contrast with this it may not be out of place to quote the passage in which Lord Macaulay traces the spirit of compromise which pervaded the ceremonial, as well as the creed, of the Church of England.

"Utterly rejecting the doctrine of transubstantiation, and condemning as idolatrous all adoration paid to the sacramental bread and wine, she yet, to the disgust of the Puritan, required her children to receive the memorials of divine love, meekly kneeling upon their knees. Discarding many rich vestments which surrounded the altars of the ancient faith, she yet retained, to the horror of weak minds, a robe of white linen, typical of the purity which belonged to her as the mystical spouse of Christ. Discarding a crowd of pantomimic gestures which, in the Roman Catholic worship, are substituted for intelligible words, she yet shocked many rigid Protestants by marking the infant just sprinkled from the font with the sign of the Cross. The Roman Catholic addressed his prayers to a multitude of saints, among whom were numbered many men of doubtful, and some of hateful, character. The Puritan refused the addition of saint even to the apostle of the Gentiles, and to the disciple whom Jesus loved. The Church of England, though she asked for the intercession of no created being, still set apart days for the commemoration of some who had done and suffered great things for the faith. She retained confirmation and ordination as edifying rites: but she degraded them from the rank of sacraments. Shrift was no part of her system. Yet she gently invited the dying penitent to confess his sins to a divine, and empowered her ministers to soothe the departing soul by an absolution which breathes the very spirit of the old religion."¹

¹ *History*, vol. i. pp. 53, 54.

The time when such a system could be adopted by the Scotch Reformers, if it had ever existed, was long past. In England it readily found acceptance, favoured by many peculiarities in the origin and early development of the Reformed Establishment. Devised by unenthusiastic statesmen the English Church polity was given to a people naturally averse to extremes, with whom there were no memories of a recent and desperate contest to rouse suspicion of its compromising spirit or hatred of the traces it bore of the august superstition which they had so long revered. And, while much was lost, sufficient of the temporalities was retained to maintain with propriety the observances which that polity required. The decent church, the stately cathedral, the wealth and dignity of the superior clergy, gave appropriateness to some measure of ceremonial splendour. In Scotland none of these influences were at work. Hence the rude simplicity of the new rites may be rested on grounds more intelligible than a love for the semblance of "convivial enjoyment," or a disposition to demand rather than to supplicate the favour of the Deity. There Protestantism took its shape, not from the hands of statesmen, but from the hands of zealots who, hardly victorious in their long struggle with Popery, could tolerate nothing that reminded them of their formidable foe. The Church, despoiled by greedy magnates, had no longer the means of maintaining any stateliness of ceremonial. Nor, had these means existed, would they have been so used. The crying sin of the Roman Catholic Church had been idolatry; and everything that recalled her observances was held to savour of idolatry. The worship of the heart must be independent of all outward seeming. Even the ordinary attitude of devotion was rejected as unnecessary when approaching Him who seeth in secret; as

actively evil, because so the inward reality is forgotten in the external form. Moreover, at this time, Popery was not only hated in Scotland, but feared. The contest was too recent, and had been too arduous, for all alarm to have subsided. Popery still held its ground in the north; and a belief became general that the faithless Stuarts were experimenting upon Scottish forbearance, with the ulterior view of at last restoring the old faith in England.

Ignorance, or rather the half-knowledge which is worse than ignorance, came to aid prejudice. Popery was declared to have sprung from paganism. The "Yule vacane" was denounced as having been originally a festival in honour of the Scandinavian Jol; the surplice had been taken from the priests of Isis, and was thus one of the abominations from which the people had fled into the desert. In the temper in which the people then were, fancies like these found ready credence, and exercised a powerful influence.

Such were the motives which animated the resistance to the Articles of Perth. James, after a struggle, gave way; showing in this, perhaps, wiser "kingcraft" than in any other action of his life. Laud, then rising into note, urged persistence; but the king not only disregarded his evil counsel, but opposed himself to Laud's promotion, hardly yielding on the latter point to the solicitations of Buckingham. He gave his reasons in a remarkable statement, quoted by Mr. Burton with the true comment that, if we knew nothing else of James, the sagacity therein displayed would entitle him to be classed among the wisest of rulers.

"The plain truth is that I keep Laud back from all place of rule and authority, because I find he has a restless spirit, and cannot see when matters are well, but loves to toss and change, and to bring things to a pitch of reformation floating

in his own brain, which may endanger the steadfastness of that which is in a good pass, God be praised. I speak not at random. He hath made himself known to me to be such a one; for when three years since, I had obtained of the assembly of Perth to consent to five articles of order and decency in correspondence with this Church of England, I gave them promise, by attestation of faith made, that I would try their obedience no farther anent ecclesiastical affairs, nor put them out of their own way, which custom had made pleasing to them, with any new encroachment. Yet this man hath pressed me to invite them to a nearer conjunction with the liturgy and canons of this nation; but I sent him back again with the frivolous draught he had drawn. It seemed I remembered St. Austin's rule better than he: '*Ipsa mutatio consuetudinis, etiam quæ adjuvat utilitate, novitate perturbat.*' For all this he feared not mine anger, but assaulted me again with another ill-fangled platform to make that stubborn Kirk stoop more to the English pattern. But I durst not play fast and loose with my word. He knows not the stomach of that people; but I ken the story of my grandmother the queen-regent, that after she was inveigled to break her promise made to some mutineers at a Perth meeting, she never said good day, but from thence, being much beloved before, was despised by her people."

Charles I. succeeded to his father's throne, some short while after these words were written for his guidance, in the spring of 1625. From the first he disregarded them, and threw himself into the wild schemes of Laud. At this point Scottish history again assumes an interest which extends far beyond Scotland. In the anti-papal conflict Scotland was the proposed battle-field of the contending forces of Europe. Now her sphere of action is less extensive, but the part she plays becomes more decisive and more dignified. Her ecclesiastical politics combine with her secular, and both flow on together in one great stream, bearing with it the liberties of England.

Those liberties were never before or since so endangered as they were by the policy of Charles. After the decision in favour of ship-money, Strafford's plan of "Thorough" bid fair for success. But a few years' peace, and the ship-money would have maintained a standing army; and the liberties of England would have been as the liberties of Spain. At this crisis an act of "insane bigotry" changed the whole aspect of affairs. The use of Laud's liturgy was forced upon Scotland. Patient under much, the Scotch people would not tolerate that the public worship of God should be profaned, as they thought, by a prelatial service. Constitutional resistance in Scotland was impossible. But they were a turbulent and unruly race: as prompt to appeal to the God of battles as the English had been two centuries before. Their rebellion, and invasion of England, brought upon Charles a war expenditure, and forced him to meet his Parliament. But for that, it is very possible he might have continued to govern without a Parliament, as he had done for eleven years; and, ere the close of his reign, accomplished his cherished design of transforming the English Constitution into a despotism. With the union of the crowns it might have been confidently anticipated that the independent action of Scotland would end. And such, unquestionably, would have been her fate but for the ecclesiastical innovations of Charles. The fierceness of the passions which they roused elevated Scotland to a prominence and influence altogether disproportionate to her real power; and, at the crisis of 1640, enabled her to determine the political future of the Empire.

"Of the two states united, the small state had ardour and strength sufficient to drag the large state along with it; for Scotland began the contest which, after becoming so memor-

able in British history, influenced the fate of the whole civilised world.”¹

The whole of this long struggle, from its beginning with the resumption of the Church revenues in 1625, down to the final outbreak in 1640, is narrated by Mr. Burton with remarkable vigour. He has vividly realised to himself the ever-varying story; and he therefore tells it with perfect sequence, and in true proportion. The narration occupies the greater part of the sixth and seventh volumes; and though minute, as the theme deserves, is never dull or prolix, often strikingly novel and forcible. The writer rises to an unwonted command of the picturesque when he describes the renewal of the Covenant in Greyfriars' Churchyard under the shadow of the castle-rock, or the meeting of the great assembly of 1638 in the Cathedral of Glasgow—a meeting of hardly less historical moment than the meeting of the Long Parliament itself, but for which, indeed, it may well be doubted if the Long Parliament would ever have met at all.

The contest between Episcopacy and Presbyterianism, which had been carried on with varying fortunes, but not, heretofore, with irreconcilable bitterness, or beyond hope of a peaceful settlement, came to a swift decision in this storm. Under the forcing power of oppression, Scotland had in three years become more violently Presbyterian than in the seventy which had preceded. The whole Episcopal hierarchy was overthrown, the bishops were deposed, not a few of them excommunicated; and the Presbyterian system of Church Courts formally reconstructed. In 1640 these proceedings were ratified by the Estates, who also adopted the Covenant, and imposed it, under civil penalties, on the whole community.

Our limits forbid our following Mr. Burton through

¹ Burton, vol. vii. p. 281.

the details of this great national crisis ; it presents, however, one or two features deserving of special notice.

The popular impression is that the Scotch rebelled rather than submit to the use of any recognised form for the conduct of public worship. This is a mistake. The Scotch had then no aversion to a liturgy ; on the contrary, they had long been familiar with the use of one. In 1557 the Lords of the Congregation had agreed that in parish churches the English liturgy of Edward VI. should be adopted. In 1560 that was superseded by the Book of Common Order, commonly known as Knox's Liturgy, of which Mr. Burton¹ gives an interesting account, describing it as "less ritualistic in character than the English Common Prayer." The book, no doubt, had some enemies. There were congregations, even at that date, which rejected it in common with all forms of prayer. On the other hand, there were congregations who preferred the English Prayer-book, and were permitted to use it undisturbed. It is when we contrast such liberality in the national temper with the fanaticism into which oppression and persecution drove the Scotch, that we are able truly to appreciate what evil may be wrought by misgovernment. On the whole, we may safely conclude that the Book of Common Order was popular throughout Scotland. It was used at morning service in the very church where, in the afternoon of the same day, the introduction of Laud's liturgy roused the wrath of Jenny Geddes. What the Scotch objected to was the substitution for their own service-book of a new one and a worse one. Nay, Laud's liturgy differed, for the worse, not only from the Book of Common Order, but even from the English Prayer-book. And in this they suspected—nor can we pronounce their suspicions

¹ Vol. v. pp. 63-70.

unreasonable—an insidious design. That design was, they thought, to establish Popery in England; and the present outrage was a cunning experiment on the vile body of Scotland, to discover how much the people would endure. The Scotch Commissioners so put their case in the articles against Laud: “By this their doing they did not aim to make us conform to England, but to make Scotland first (whose weakness in resisting they had before experienced in novations of government and of some points of worship), and therefore England, conform to Rome, and even in those matters wherein England had separated from Rome ever since the time of the Reformation.” More than all, perhaps, the people rose up against the mode in which this Prayer-book was forced upon them. It was the culminating point of a system of innovation long and deliberately carried on; it brought before the people, in one tangible result, the meaning and purpose of the misgovernment which for so many years they had endured. As far back as 1636 Charles had issued at his own hand, and enforced on the clergy by his sole authority, a body of canons for the governance of the Church. These canons contained, it must be confessed, little that was really objectionable, though they did enjoin certain forms which savoured of prelacy; but the flagrant illegality of the mode in which they were imposed incensed the nation far more than their substance.¹ Even the staunchest Episcopalians murmured; indeed, so high-handed was the usurpation of authority, that it offended the

One of these canons, whatever may have been thought of it then, would be highly approved by many Presbyterian congregations at the present day. “Albeit the whole time of our life be but short to be bestowed in the service of God, yet seeing He tempereth that work to our weakness, it is ordained that preachers in their sermons and prayers eschew tediousness, and by a succinct doing leave in the people an appetite for further instruction, and a new desire for devotion.”

priestly pretensions of the bishops hardly less than it exasperated the declared opponents of the royal prerogative.

A strange zeal for special points of doctrine and form moved certain of the Stuart race. James II. "lost three kingdoms for a mass ;" Charles I. raised the rebellion which cost him his kingdom and his head for a liturgy. It seems probable that, in matters secular, he might, so far as Scotland was concerned, have indulged his tyrannical nature with impunity. Constitutional resistance was, as we have said, impossible ; and the people would not readily have taken up arms for any lighter cause than purity of worship. So far as we can now judge they were animated by no dislike to the person of the Sovereign—even when they delivered him up to his English subjects, in a manner more illustrative of the national prudence than of the national chivalry. Beyond doubt they were not urged by hostility to the throne. They at once proclaimed Charles II. as his father's successor ; and opposed themselves, in support of the monarchy, to the whole power of Cromwell. But the one thing they could not away with, which they were resolved to resist at all hazards and to the last, was aught that savoured of Popery. And this was what they believed to be thrust upon them.

At the same time, the people could not fail to remark, as a symptom of the same policy, a subtle and persistent system of encroachment on the privileges, such as they were, of the Scotch Parliament. It is difficult, indeed, to say whether hatred of the kirk or love of despotic power was the leading motive with the Stuart kings. Charles was, after a fashion, a keen Episcopalian ; and James had a very natural dislike for the austere and rude zealots who had so often rebuked him and set him at naught. But no motive

could hold long sway in the infirm mind of James ; and Charles, on an emergency, had no scruple in giving his royal sanction to an Act declaring Episcopacy contrary to the Word of God. We suspect that, on the whole, much as the Stuarts loved Episcopacy, they hated freedom more ; but their policy was of a piece. The liberties of Scotland were at that time involved in the independence of the Church, and so could be, and were, attacked together.

The grievances of which the Scotch complained may be gathered from the explicit statement which they made of their demands on the eve of hostilities. These were :—the abolition of the Court of High Commission ; the withdrawal and disavowal of the Book of Canons, the Book of Ordination, and Laud's Service-book ; a free Parliament ; and a free General Assembly.

Charles took part in this contest with his usual weakness and duplicity. He issued a solemn declaration assuring "all men" that he would not press the Canons and Service-book but in a fair and legal way ; and at the very same time he wrote to Hamilton, the Lord High Commissioner, declaring that "I will rather die than yield to those impertinent and damnable demands." He threw away his only chance of beating the Scotch when they first invaded England ; thinking to ward off the danger by entering into negotiations which, on his part, were a mere pretence. Mr. Burton seems even to credit the story—widely believed at the time—that the Irish rebellion was secretly stirred up by the court, and that Charles, when in Scotland in 1661, actually sent the Irish rebels a Commission with the Great Seal of Scotland, authorising them to make war upon "all English Protestants" within the island. When we remember that, through ill-luck or treachery, all this miserable faithlessness was known to his opponents, we cannot

but wonder at their long-suffering. It were beyond the scope of this article to dwell upon the part played by Scotland during the civil war—her triumphs and her humiliation. The secular affairs of Scotland during this time—and, indeed, ever since the accession of James to the English throne—really form part of the history of England, and have been so regarded by English historians. Mr. Burton, feeling this, has treated them with brevity; his reviewer may be permitted to pass them over in silence. It seems better to complete our sketch of the development of Scottish ecclesiasticism; worthy of attention both from its peculiar features, and because of the influence which it long exercised, and, to a considerable extent, still exercises, over the people.

Few sovereigns have ever enjoyed nobler opportunities of beneficent legislation than Charles II.; and especially as touching the affairs of the Churches. In England, wise and firm statesmanship might have restrained the fury of the restored Cavaliers; might have redeemed the errors of Elizabeth; and, to the exclusion doubtless of many zealots and fanatics, might have embraced, within one liberal and expansive Church, men, differing indeed in opinion, but differing in moderation and with mutual indulgence—such men as Usher on the one side, and Baxter on the other. In Scotland a like work of peace and reconciliation would have been more easy. For there no powerful body of exiles had returned, thirsting for revenge, resolute against concession. On the contrary, the state of Scotch parties gave promise of a ready compromise. The wild zealots of the West, though protected, had been tamed by the administration of Cromwell. And in the days of their power they had so borne themselves as to have alienated the great bulk of the people. Many even of the stern soldiers

who followed Leslie across the Tyne had cooled in their zeal for the Covenant. For, in their minds, the rebellion and the dream of three covenanted kingdoms was now associated with the great overthrow of Dunbar, and years of alien domination. To the younger generation the gloomy doctrines of a past time seemed to fly away before the new day of peace and toleration which was dawning with the restoration of their native princes. The aristocracy, secure in their possession of the church lands, had forgotten their Calvinistic zeal; the clergy were anxious for rest, and as a class thoroughly loyal. It would, then, we firmly believe, have been a work of no great difficulty to have devised a system of Church government, partly Episcopalian, partly Presbyterian in form, the establishment of which would have been welcomed by the whole nation, with a few insignificant exceptions.

Unhappily, a very different course was pursued: all idea of compromise was laid aside. The Covenant was burned by the common hangman; the whole Presbyterian polity swept away; the General Assemblies, so dear to the people, closed; Prelacy in its strictest form established—the bishops being restored to more than their former power, if to less than their former splendour¹—upwards of 300 clergymen turned out of their livings because they would not deny the orders they held, and accept Episcopal collation. To what we should ascribe this wantonness of tyranny it is not very easy to discover. Sir George Mackenzie gives a curious account of a solemn Council on Scotch affairs, in which the question of Episcopacy *versus* Presbytery was debated.² The

¹ Kirkton describes the bishops of 1612—restrained by Church Courts—as “mere pigmies” compared with the bishops of the Restoration.

² Memoirs, pp. 52-56.

establishment of Episcopacy was urged by Middleton and Glencairn—the one a brutal soldier, the other an ignorant and presumptuous peer; and both inflamed with the passions and folly of men who had long been exiles. On the other hand, the inexpediency of such a violent policy was forcibly pressed by Lauderdale, Crawford, and Hamilton. The debate is set forth by Mackenzie with considerable dramatic power; and the argument is all one way. So far as we know, every Scotchman whose opinion had any claim to respect, concurred with Lauderdale and Hamilton. Even the traitor Sharp did not desert the cause he had undertaken to uphold without some effort on its behalf. What, then, induced the adoption of a policy, certainly wicked—that, indeed, was a trifling matter—but not less certainly dangerous and cruel, and so far repugnant to the nature of the king? Kirkton thus accounts for the determination which was arrived at:—

“They (the bishops) were the best tools for tyranny in the world; for do a king what he would, their daily instruction was, kings could do no wrong, and that none might put forth a hand against the Lord’s anointed and be innocent. The king knew also that he should be sure of their vote in Parliament, desire what he would, and that they would plant a sort of ministers which might instil principles of loyalty into the people till they turned them first slaves, and then beggars.”

Such views might well have influenced Charles I.; hardly, we think, his more indifferent son. He certainly disliked Presbyterianism as much as it was in his nature to dislike anything at a distance; but even the recollection of his dismal royalty in Scotland would not have reconciled him to the infliction of great suffering, and to the risk of a desperate resistance. He would have been well content had

every man in Scotland turned Mahometan, if so only they gave no trouble to him. But his Ministers were men of different mould. The vindictive hatred which Clarendon bore towards the Puritans must have extended to the Presbyterians ; nor can we believe that at this time the bigotry of the Duke of York was without weight in the councils of the king. Nevertheless, the blame of what ensued must rest mainly with his Scottish advisers. Had the king been fairly made aware of the consequences of the course he was following, he would probably have paused. Unhappily, such men as Lauderdale and Sharp, rather than risk a temporary loss of court favour, abjured their opinions and betrayed their trust ; and stooped to the exceeding baseness of persecuting that form of worship in which they had been brought up and which in their hearts they preferred.

Principal Tulloch of St. Andrews recently made an ingenious effort to relieve the memory of Sharp from the weight of infamy which rests upon it.¹ Every respect is due to such a vindication from such a quarter—from a man who, while a good churchman, is yet a thorough and steady Liberal. We cannot, however, think the defence made out. The charge against Sharp is not, as Principal Tulloch seems to suppose, that he went to London with any design to play the traitor. The mission which he undertook he probably intended to fulfil. But he would not imperil his own advancement ; he was unable to withstand the slightest frown of power. Animated by no conceivable motive save mere self-seeking, he deserted the cause he was sent to support, concealed his perfidy with a complete cunning, blinding even the most

¹ See article, Archbishop Sharp, "North British Review," June 1867 ; an article stated by Principal Tulloch to be his in "Macmillan's Magazine" for December 1870.

suspicious by his assumption of sanctity, of disappointment, of weariness with the world—he all the while being in effect Archbishop of St. Andrews, devising the subtlest and safest mode of carrying out the designs of the court, and waiting only opportunity to oppress his former friends with more than the proverbial pertinacity and cruelty of a renegade. He had capacity for affairs, and a courage which commands admiration; he was a faithless partisan, an obsequious self-seeker, a cruel ruler, an apostate priest; and the influence of a profession which, if insincere, cannot fail to corrupt, debased his nature even below the nature of Lauderdale.

Mr. Burton has devoted considerable labour to the character and conduct of Sharp. He has given large extracts from the Archbishop's correspondence with Lauderdale, and so brings the man fully and fairly before us. He, too, entirely rejects Dr. Tulloch's defence; and no one, we should think, can read the 77th and 78th chapters of his History without adhesion to his severer views. Principal Tulloch himself, if we may judge from an expression in a recent article by him in "Macmillan's Magazine," seems now to entertain doubts of his own lenient judgment.

It is, indeed, difficult to speak too strongly of the evil which these men wrought to their country. It may be urged that no firmness would have successfully upheld Presbyterianism against the first fervour of the Restoration. But, had Scottish statesmen been commonly honest, the prelacy established would have been of a very different type, and would have been enforced by very different means. Charles himself was the reverse of a persecutor; and the ideas which from time to time gained a temporary ascendancy in his councils, as at the fall of Clarendon, and again at the overflow of the Cabal, were utterly hostile to such

a government as the government of Scotland, had the reality been fully known. Even as it was, what slight relaxations of the heavy yoke took place from time to time were all concessions from England ; the full fierceness of the tyranny was of home growth. The nobles, no longer apprehensive that the restoration of Episcopacy might involve the resumption of the church lands, and not indisposed to overthrow a democratic church, were obsequious to the lightest wish of the court, and carried the court policy into excesses from which English statesmen would have shrunk ; the gentry eagerly followed the lead of their superiors ; the clergy, from Sharp urging on the fiery persecution of the Council Board to the curates who furnished lists of their non-conforming parishioners to Claverhouse's dragoons, were resolute on the complete triumph of their own sect. The power was supplied by England ; the actual work of oppression was intrusted to native greed and cruelty. As Mr. Burton observes, there was a meanness about the whole thing which makes the designs of Charles and Laud appear dignified—almost excusable. For in them there was at least something of an idea ; the delusive dream which mocked the king and the prelate was to restore the splendour of ceremonial, the wealth of decoration, the ritualistic symbolism which the Church had lost ; and without which they believed—nor does the teaching of history contradict them—no Church can hold lasting dominion over the imaginations of men. But in the Government of the Restoration, the largest charity can discern no motive which is other than base, material, and self-seeking. In contrast, even the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes looks like an act of statesmanship, dictated, if by intolerance, at least also by sincerity.

At no period of Scottish history, as we remarked

in our former notice of Mr. Burton's book, have her nobles, as a class, been much to boast of. But the rulers of this unhappy time had attained a peculiar eminence in vice. Besides their cruelty, they evinced a general depravity of nature which it is hard to parallel. Even the feeling of honour was dead among them. The assassination of Archbishop Sharp was doubtless a great crime; but the guilt of it seems trivial in contrast with the judicial murder of Mitchell, at whose trial all the chief members of the Privy Council—Sharp himself included—committed deliberate perjury, in order to secure the death of a crazy fanatic, whom they had already half killed with torture, until even the Scottish Judges of that day hid their faces with their hands from shame or from fear.

A curious disposition to defend the Restoration Government has lately appeared in some quarters. It is of recent growth even among Scotch Tories. Hume calls the legislation of the Scotch Parliament at this time "an excellent prelude of all the rigours of the Inquisition;" and his deliberate judgment is that "it were endless, as well as shocking, to enumerate all the instances of persecution, or, in other words, of absurd tyranny, which at that time prevailed in Scotland." But the loyalty of the historian of the house of Stuart has been rejected as weak by the Tory sentimentalists of our day. They accuse even Sir Walter Scott of leanings towards the Covenant. In order to the success of this re-hearing of the judgment of history, the cruelty charged against the Government must be disproved; and accordingly much labour has, with this object, been bestowed on what Mr. Burton, with a somewhat dismal jocularity of the legal type, calls the "leading cases" of the Christian carrier and the Wigtown martyrs. The late Professor Aytoun

distinguished himself by an elaborate argument to show that Claverhouse had nothing to do with the murder of John Brown—was not even present at it. This was conclusively disposed of by Mr. Mark Napier, who published the original despatch of Claverhouse himself, giving a cool and minute report of the whole tragedy. But Mr. Napier having demolished Mr. Aytoun's position, has set up a novelty of his own, by propounding a theory that the women—commonly known as the Wigtown martyrs—were never drowned in the Solway at all.

The arguments—if they may be so called—by which Mr. Napier endeavoured to maintain his discovery have been already disposed of in this Journal.¹ We do not propose to renew the discussion. The matter has been put beyond the reach of doubt in a volume lately published by Dr. Stewart, the parish minister of Glasserton—an admirable specimen of historical investigation; thorough in research, moderate in tone, and judicial in its conclusions. Even the patience and courtesy of Mr. Burton cannot regard the extravagances of Mr. Napier as deserving of a serious answer. The closing chapters of his history have conclusively, and, it may be hoped, finally disposed of these foolish and mischievous attempts to defend the Scottish administration of Charles II. They are fair, indeed, and impartial; because Mr. Burton cannot write otherwise than fairly and impartially; but here, at least, he escapes from Arnold's condemnation of the impartiality of indifference: along his page there lives a genuine love of liberty and truth which commands our heartiest sympathy and admiration.

Such a struggle as that which we have hastily sketched could not fail to leave enduring traces. Its immediate effect was, undoubtedly, to increase the

¹ "Edinburgh Review," July 1863.

power of the clergy. The sufferings they had undergone in the cause of truth and freedom could not fail to strengthen their hold upon the people. Beyond question they misused their power. Not content with persecuting the fallen prelatists—which cannot be held altogether without excuse—they sought to extend their austere rule over all society; called in the secular arm to enforce orthodoxy and morality; punished with death alike the folly of expressing heterodox opinions and the licentiousness of marrying a deceased wife's sister. Every one remembers the terrible indictment drawn up against them by Mr. Buckle; but it is unfair, with Mr. Buckle, to hold the clergy alone responsible for these cruelties. They were, at the worst, true exponents of popular feeling. It should not be forgotten that, irrespective of the influence of Reformed doctrine, there grew up all over Europe, at the close of the sixteenth century, a vehement reaction against the profligacy of the age. In France that reaction had shown itself in the austerity of the Huguenots; in England it sowed the seeds of Puritanism; in Scotland it ran to wilder extremes, intensified by the temper of the people, and the persecution they had endured, in the cause, as they thought, of morality and truth. The clergy used their power unsparingly—often iniquitously; but their power would have been slight had they not been supported by public opinion. The statesmen and lawyers who, without the excuse of sincerity, lent themselves to such a policy, incurred far deeper guilt. It may have been due to the influence of the clergy that, after the Reformation, adultery was made a capital offence, and fornication brought under the criminal law;¹ but for ecclesiastics to

¹ An offender in this sort for the *third* time, in addition to fine or imprisonment, was “to be tane to the deipest and foulest pule, or water of the towne or parochin, there to be thrice douked; and thin after banished the said towne or parochin for ever.”—Acts of Parliament, 1567.

mistake the true sphere of jurisprudence is not very extraordinary or blameworthy. The blame rests rather with the laymen who allowed such legislation, and enforced it. One of the most vigorous efforts of the Scottish tribunals in behalf of morality was the execution of a tailor for marrying "his first wife's half brother's daughter;" and that took place in 1630, a time when the influence of the Presbyterian clergy was not great.¹

Whatever may have been its extent, the interference of the clergy in the administration of the law was not of long duration. But it is often alleged that they retain to this day a pernicious sway over the minds of the people. This, we are persuaded, is an erroneous view. The lowland Scotch, at least, are not priest-ridden; they accept, doubtless, many priestly dogmas, but they do so because persuaded of their truth. Those only who unthinkingly believe whatever a priest tells them, or do whatever a priest bids them, are in truth priest-ridden. For example, at a general election, we read that a clergyman in South Shropshire, "finding that numbers of his parishioners had promised to vote for Mr. More, went about telling them that they were about to vote for the Pope, for the Queen to be beheaded, and Protestant clergymen to be burned for their faith." Now, if it be true that any reverend canvasser by such means induced his parishioners to break their promises, we may, without much want of charity, regard those parishioners as "priest-ridden." But men open to such influences would be hard to find in any parish in Scotland. The Scottish peasant has many extravagances of creed which he often carries into severity of action; but he has thought them out for himself; and we believe that in many parts of Scotland at the

¹ Arnot's "Criminal Trials," p. 306.

present day there is more control exercised *over* than *by* clergymen.

And here it is that we trace the bad effects of the struggles of the seventeenth century—not in the present power of the clergy, but in the austere beliefs to which the people yet cling ; partly because congenial to the national intellect and temper, but far more because they have come down hallowed by the authority of the stern teachers of the old time. Hence the real state of ecclesiastical matters in Scotland is this, that while the bulk of the population adhere to those beliefs, and to the unattractive forms of worship which are associated with them, the educated class is becoming more impatient of them every day. The clergy, as a body, must go with the majority ; and the result is, that in few countries do cultivated and liberal men stand so entirely aloof from clerical influence as in Scotland at the present time. These men are not irreligious. On the contrary, they have, we suspect, a more intelligent interest in theological questions than the same class in England—certainly far more than was entertained by their own forefathers ; but they find nothing in the clerical teaching around them which they can respect or believe.¹ There are some men in the Scotch Churches who are capable of supplying this want ; but their number is too few to permit hope of a speedy change.

On the other hand, the Presbyterian Church has been powerful for much good. In the first place, it should never be forgotten that to the revolt of 1640 not only Scotland, but England likewise, owes her freedom. The subsequent influence of the Presbyterian polity has been, on the whole, in accordance with that beginning. The presence of the laity as a

¹ See a valuable essay on "Church Tendencies in Scotland," by Dr. Wallace, of Edinburgh, in "Recess Studies," 1870.

ruling power in the Church has been a check, more or less stringent, on clerical pretensions. The right of representation conceded to all; the gradation of church courts—presbyteries, synods, assemblies—exercising their jurisdiction according to prescribed rules, and in which freedom of discussion is unrestrained, could not fail to foster principles favourable to liberty, or at least hostile to the despotic exercise of authority. Moreover, the long resistance to power left a feeling of independence very active within the Church. This became conspicuously manifest after the enforcement of patronage by the Tory ministers of Anne; and since then it has broken out from time to time in those great movements of Dissent which form so marked a peculiarity in Scottish ecclesiastical history. The Dissenting bodies in Scotland hold a very different position from their brethren in England. Few Scottish churchmen would go with the clergy of the diocese of Oxford in classing together Dissenters and beershops as the great evils they have to strive against. “When a country squire hears of an ape, his first feeling is to give it nuts and apples; when he hears of a Dissenter, his immediate impulse is to commit it to the county jail, to shave its head, to alter its customary food, and to have it privately whipped. This is no caricature, but an accurate picture of national feelings.” This was true when Peter Plymley wrote it sixty years ago; and something of the feeling lingers in England still. But in Scotland the Dissenter cannot be so regarded. He is too powerful. If not liked, he is at least respected, even by the lairds; and the Dissenting clergy are, as a rule, Liberals. Hence, if we include all denominations, we find that in Scotland clerical influence is, in secular politics, on the Liberal side.

Moreover, much of the evil we have indicated is in

fairness chargeable, not against Scottish Presbyterianism, but against those who persecuted it. At the union of the crowns it would have been easy to have given Scotland a system of church government which would have reconciled all classes, and rendered possible the harmonious development of the religious life of the country ; and even after the Restoration such a task would not have been beyond the reach of any statesmanlike capacity. An opposite course was taken in the very wantonness of tyranny, and those who took it are mainly responsible for the varied and long-enduring mischiefs which were inseparable from such a policy.

The general condition of the country from 1567 to 1688, the period embraced by these volumes, was deplorable. A discerning eye might even then have seen, in the growth of the middle class, good promise for the future ; but there was little of present happiness or prosperity. The ten years of the usurpation formed a brief exception ; Cromwell's government of Scotland conclusively refutes Mr. Hallam's charge—that he “ never showed any signs of a legislative mind or any desire to place his renown on that noblest basis—the amelioration of social institutions.” It is impossible to exaggerate the benefits bestowed on Scotland by his legislation. He bridled the Highlands, he silenced the Church, he reformed the constitution. He gave her purity of justice ; allowed perfect free-trade with England ; opened to her enterprise the expanding field of English commerce ;¹ abolished private rights of jurisdiction ; swept away the whole complex machinery of feudalism. He anticipated not only the Union of 1707, and the reforms of 1748, but

¹ How rapidly Scotland thrived during this short period may be gathered from the sum subscribed to the Darien Expedition by Glasgow alone—£56,000. Such a sum would have been thought fabulous before Cromwell.

even the commercial and legal legislation of our own day. How far the great Protector was in advance of his age is strikingly illustrated by the fact that, in a Parliament elected in 1868, all the learning and power of the present Lord Advocate can hardly succeed, against professional interests and professional prejudice, in setting the law of Scotland as free from the trammels of a worn-out system as Cromwell left it. With the restoration of her "native princes" came back all Scotland's miseries. The Navigation Acts of 1660 denied her any share in the trade of England; and thus, during the unprecedented advance of that country from the Restoration to the Revolution, Scotland was every day becoming poorer. When Mr. Burton's history ends we are at the nadir of the national happiness and prosperity. The Revolution, of course, put a stop to persecution. But William could do little or nothing to advance her material well-being. There was, and could be, no real improvement in this respect till after the Union of 1707.

These concluding volumes of Mr. Burton's work are in every way superior to the former ones. The themes with which he has had here to deal are, for the most part, better suited to his powers, and possess a more practical interest than the purposeless, if romantic, turbulence of the early period. Accordingly, he has entered into them with zeal, and treated them with fulness and originality. Also, when occasion offers, he shows command of a richer descriptive power, and greater felicity in narrative. In his style, too, there is a marked improvement. The force and vigour remain; the harshness and inelegancies have, in great measure, disappeared. Blemishes, however, may yet be traced:—of phraseology, as in the use of such a word as the word "genteel;" of quaintness

amounting to absurdity ; as when a reckless policy is compared to “the violent frolics of the young men who in the present day wrench off knockers and upset policemen ;”¹ of confused and even ungrammatical expression, as in the following sentence:—“The unobtrusive and silent growth of the powers destined to come into contest in great convulsions are the most important, yet the least obtainable, portion of the history of any notable epoch in the history of a large community—and the community involved in the Scottish movements of the day was a large one, for it was the whole of the British Empire.”² Here too, as before, the pleasure of the reader is marred by the want of method. In the treatment of the various subjects due regard is not paid to truth of historic proportion ; and one topic succeeds another with an abruptness which is provoking and confusing—the reader, absorbed in some vital aspect of the great ecclesiastical strife, on turning the page, finds himself without warning plunged into the details of a miserable Highland feud. It is with great regret that we find Mr. Burton still open to the charge of inaccuracy. It has a curious pagan effect to see the thanksgiving of the Huguenot prayer-books styled the “*Action des graces* ;” and, if that may be looked on as a slip of the pen, no such excuse will avail for the following carelessness. Speaking of Sharp, Mr. Burton says:—

“We are told how, presiding at a witch-trial, he was confounded and showed symptoms of terror when the victim asked him who was with him in his closet on Saturday night last betwixt twelve and one o’clock. He³ confessed to Rothés, who was inquisitive on the matter, that it was ‘the muckle black devil.’”

This of course implies, either that Sharp shared the

¹ Retained in 2d ed., vol. v. p. 281.

² Vol. vi. p. 472, c. 70.

³ Altered in 2d ed. to “The witness.”

popular belief in a compact between himself and the Prince of Darkness, or that he was amusing himself at the expense of his colleague with a grim humour of which we have no other trace. But the story, as really told by Wodrow, relieves from this puzzling alternative. Rothes did not make his inquiries of Sharp, but of the prisoner; and the confession came, not from the Archbishop, but from the witch.

It is impossible to deny that this inaccuracy, even in the more modified form in which it appears in these volumes, seriously detracts from Mr. Burton's reputation as an historian. Taken together with his love of paradox, it shakes our faith in his guidance. He is incapable of wilfully misleading; his impartiality is beyond question; his research is great; yet he seems to want that craving for truth, that impatience of any chance of error, which is the first virtue of an historian. He comes under the censure of Thucydides—*οὕτως ἀταλαίπωρος τοῖς πολλοῖς ἡ ζήτησις τῆς ἀληθείας, καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ἐτοῖμα μᾶλλον τρέπονται*; with, perhaps this qualification, that Mr. Burton's *ἀταλαιπωρία* throws him back not so much on the *ἐτοῖμον*, as on the paradoxical and the fanciful.

We much regret that Mr. Burton should not have included in his work some account of the development of Scottish jurisprudence during the seventeenth century. Amidst the convulsions of civil war and the storms of religious persecution—even in spite of the blighting influence of judicial corruption—the municipal law of Scotland was then undergoing a course of improvement, both in form and substance, unexampled either before or since. Statutes of prescription were passed; the law of tithes was settled; sound principles of bankrupt law were recognised; valuable enactments were made for the encouragement of agriculture; in the process of “ranking and sale” some

of the most advanced principles of modern land legislation were anticipated. The men who devised these measures—the lawyers of the seventeenth century—we know to have been men of learning and accomplishment, sound jurists, good scholars, eloquent rhetoricians. Looking at their legislation we cannot but believe that they must also have been animated by a desire to improve the jurisprudence and advance the prosperity of their country. On the other hand they were, many of them, cruel bigots, subservient tyrants, faithless, and corrupt. Nor did this side of their characters fail to leave its mark. They pressed upon the people a criminal law, in which regulations sometimes strangely favourable to the accused were nullified by vicious practice; they administered, without remorse and without thought of change, the Scots law of treason, which Mr. Hallam justly stigmatises as “one of the most odious engines that tyranny ever devised against public virtue;” they introduced a rigid system of entails exactly four hundred years after the English nobles had inflicted this evil on their country, and more than two hundred years after the boldness of the English judges had, in *Taltarum’s* case, found out a remedy. The strange combination, in those men, of culture and barbarism; of sagacity, patriotism, and statesmanship, with bigotry, cruelty, and oppression; and the result of all, not only on the law, but on the whole national development, would have afforded material for an interesting and instructive page of history.

We regret even more Mr. Burton’s silence as to matters academical. Education has always been, as it were, a specialty of Scotland; and no history of that country can be regarded as complete in which her peculiar and long-established system, both of school and university training, is disposed of in some

half dozen pages. As a mere question of art some detailed account of the origin of the older universities might have afforded a picturesque relief to the gloom of early Scotch history. How effectively, for example, Mr. Motley varies his sombre story by his description of the pompous ceremonial which attended the foundation of the university of Leyden. Of yet higher historical value would have been a clear account of the great educational scheme of Knox—what was its scope, how, and by whom, it was frustrated. For Knox's wide designs, though much talked about, are not generally known; and an exposition of them would, at this particular time, have been signally opportune.

With all its faults and shortcomings, which we have not been slow to indicate, Mr. Burton's work is now, and will probably continue to be, the best history of Scotland. So far as matters ecclesiastical are concerned, it has, and need fear, no rival. So far as regards the War of Independence, it holds the same position of superiority. If on minor points he has been less successful; if his narrative sometimes fails to attract, or his argument to convince; if we can mark omissions which mar the completeness of the work; we may yet feel justly grateful to the historian who has for the first time placed before us in the light of truth those aspects of Scottish history which are most worthy of study and best calculated to reward it.

SCOTTISH STATESMEN OF THE REVOLUTION: THE DALRYMPLES.¹

SCOTLAND has not been fertile in great statesmen. During what may be called the kingly period of her history—from the accession of Robert II. to the death of James V.—the one thing essential to the well-being of the people, and to the defence of the country against English invasion, was to curb an overgrown, turbulent, and treacherous nobility; a task to which no man was found equal. At the great uprising of the Reformation a wider field was opened; nobler ends came into view. Knox, though not in the strict sense of the word a statesman, yet did the work of the greatest: he awoke a national life; he called into political existence the middle-classes of his countrymen. From various causes Scotland, in his time, took a place in the politics of Europe out of all proportion to her real power. But her statesmen, with the single exception of Murray, were unworthy of their opportunities. Maitland of Lethington has a

¹ 1. "Memoir of Sir James Dalrymple, First Viscount Stair. A Study in the History of Scotland and Scotch Law during the Seventeenth Century." By Æ. J. G. Mackay, Advocate. Edinburgh: 1873.

2. "The Stair Annals." By John Murray Graham. Edinburgh: 1875.

3. "William Carstares. A Character and Career of the Revolutionary Epoch." By Robert Herbert Story, Minister of Roseneath. London: 1874. —[Reprinted from the "Edinburgh Review," No. 291. January 1876.]

great but undeserved reputation. He was a man, as Mr. Burton has shown, rather crafty than wise; he seems to have studied the subtleties of Italian politicians beyond the powers of his own brain; he fought with armour which he had not proved, and the result of all his tortuous devices was hopeless failure.

On the accession of James to the English throne Scotland sank into insignificance and degradation. From this she was, for a brief season, raised, not by any efforts of Scotch statesmanship, but by the wholesome stimulus of the tyranny of the Stuarts, wanton with prosperity; and strong, as they thought, with the strength of England. The Covenant, the abjuration of prelacy by the Assembly of 1638, the invasions of England, were bold and vigorous measures. It is not too much to say that to the conduct of Scotland at this juncture England probably owed her freedom. But the end was unworthy of such beginnings. The fervour of popular feeling which had supported Knox blazed up again for a time, but could not long endure. The national life of the Reformation period had died away. The people had been crushed by civil war, by poverty, by the utter misrule which followed upon the Union of the Crowns. "The gentry of that nation," writes one of Cromwell's officers, "have such influence over the commonalty that they can lead them which way they please." Unhappily no one was found who could lead them wisely. The needy nobles and mercenary soldiers who led the Scottish army into England were animated by no higher motive than a love of English quarters and English money; the spirit of resistance to ecclesiastical tyranny, which at first stimulated the people, soon degenerated under evil guidance into a fierce intolerance, a determination to impose Presbyterianism upon all men, which found its fitting con-

clusion in the acceptance of Charles II. as a Covenanted King. During the Usurpation Scotland was preserved from native rule ; under the restored authority of her "native princes," the wisdom of Ahitophel could have availed nothing to any upright Scottish politician, except in so far as it might have counselled the necessity of a speedy retreat to Holland.

At the Revolution dawned a day bright with a fairer promise for Scotland than for any portion of the British dominions. The oppression from which she was then set free had been greater than the oppression of England ; she could look to the future with a better hope than the most sanguine could entertain for Ireland. Unlike the case of England, so utter had been the disregard of law, so entire the overthrow of every cherished institution, that the whole constitutional fabric had to be re-constructed. Unlike the case of Ireland, enmities of race and creed were not so deeply rooted as to render such re-construction hopelessly beyond the reach of wisdom and honest purpose. Again the leaders, by position, of the Scottish people failed in the time of need. If, as Mr. Arnold thinks, the virtue of an aristocracy lies in openness to ideas, never was a body less worthy of the name than the nobility of Scotland. Happily, influences were now at work which opened a career to "new men." It is our purpose, with the aid of the books which are at the head of this article, to give some account of the foremost of these—the two Dalrymples, father and son—founders of a family which, through several generations, produced men eminent in literature, law, arms, and diplomacy.

Mr. Graham's work, with the least pretension, is the most valuable of the three. It embraces the life of the founder of the house, of his son, the first Earl of Stair, and of his grandson, the Field-marshal and

diplomatist—the “magnanimous Stair” of Carlyle’s Frederick. He has published, for the first time, many letters of importance and interest. He has done his own part with taste and judgment. His narrative is brief but clear ; his candour and impartiality beyond praise. Mr. Mackay’s book is a more elaborate effort. It is, as he calls it, “a study in the history of Scotland and Scotch law.” And, as such, it has many merits. But it is confused and without method. Hence it leaves no vivid impression on the reader’s mind—a fatal defect in a biography. We shall have occasion, also, in the course of this article, to note instances of bad taste, of over-confidence, of one-sided judgment, in Mr. Mackay’s volume. And we are, therefore, the more anxious now to recognise his considerable research, his liberality of thought, and the freshness and vigour which animate his pages. Of Mr. Story’s labours we cannot speak so favourably. That the book is a dull book is not altogether the author’s fault. Assuredly Carstairs was no common man. Equal in astuteness and sagacity to the Master of Stair himself, he was in honesty and fidelity superior perhaps to all the politicians of his age and nation. There is reason to believe, with some degree of certainty, that he rendered good service to the State, in forwarding, against ignorance and prejudice, the true interests of Scotland. But those services, during the most important part of his career, took the shape of private counsel to William. Circumstances, together with his profession, excluded him from public life. Hence his biography wants interest—a want not supplied by his guarded correspondence. But Mr. Story’s book has graver faults than the fault of dulness. It is marked by a tone of loftiness which the reader finds nothing to justify. There is little evidence of research ; interest is not awakened by

novelty of material or originality of thought. Historical insight is wanting; there are grievous mistakes in judgments of character—as in a rhapsody about Claverhouse, and the praises of that unscrupulous turn-coat, Sir James Stewart. It is difficult not to be offended by the ungenerous spirit which finds pleasure in the repetition of the idle slander that William encouraged Monmouth's adventure in order to rid himself of a rival; it is impossible not to smile at the taste which can find in the position of Carstairs at William's death a parallel to Diocletian at Salona and Charles v. at Yuste. Inaccuracy is shown even in the slipshod way the references are noted;¹ the style, level enough as a rule, is disfigured by frequent and vain attempts at effect.² Worst of all, there are not a few traces of that bitterness towards any who chance to differ from Mr. Story—especially on matters ecclesiastical—which so painfully characterises the school to which he belongs. But we pass gladly from the duty of criticism to the more pleasing portion of our task.

The greatest of Scottish jurists was born in Ayrshire in the year 1619, of a family by no means so obscure as his enemies in after days were prone to allege. He was educated at the University of Glasgow, where he graduated in 1637; and four years

¹ As thus: "Burnet, vol. iii." "Fountainhall, Wodrow," p. 148.

² The following style of writing is the reverse of impressive: "The chamber of the Privy Council echoed with the howls of the victims of the boot. There, one day, might be seen Dalzell striking the prisoners under examination over the mouth with his sword-hilt till the blood sprang; on another, Lauderdale baring his brawny arms above the elbow, and swearing 'by Jehovah' that he would force the gentlemen of Scotland to enter into those bonds" (p. 45). Nor is a distinct idea of a political situation conveyed thus: "Jacobite stratagems, Episcopal pretensions, Presbyterian jealousies, national prejudices, personal dishonesties, and political corruptions weltered together in illimitable battle and confusion" (p. 275).

later was appointed, after a competitive examination—as was the wont then—a Professor or Regent in Philosophy. In 1648 he resigned this position for the more stirring profession of the bar, to which he was called in his twenty-ninth year. Almost immediately thereafter he was appointed Secretary to the Commissions which went to Holland seeking a virtuous Covenanter in Charles II. He is known during these visits to have formed the acquaintance of Salmasius, and he may be reasonably supposed to have profited by intercourse with the many eminent Dutch jurists then living. Sagacity, far inferior to that of Dalrymple, would have forbidden any more active support of Charles's fortunes; the future President, for about ten years, pursued in safe insignificance his professional avocations. In 1657—not ten years after he had been called to the bar—Monk recommended him to Cromwell for the office of Judge, as being “a very honest man and a good lawyer.” Stair's acceptance of this office seems to Mr. Mackay a thing requiring excuse. In our judgment it was one of the most justifiable steps in his somewhat shifty public life. Nor do we think it worth while to defend a course of which an example was set by such men as Hale in his own profession, and Blake in another. Far more questionable was his conduct under Charles. He was knighted immediately after the Restoration, and included in the first Commission of Scottish Judges. But in 1662 a Declaration was imposed on all persons in offices of trust. This measure was aimed directly at Presbyterians. The declarant affirmed solemnly the illegality of all leagues, covenants, and gatherings in the late troubles; “and particularly, that those oaths, whereof the one was commonly called ‘The National Covenant’ (as it was sworn and explained in the year 1638 and there-

after), and the other entitled 'A Solemn League and Covenant,' were and are, in themselves, unlawful oaths, and were taken by and imposed upon the subjects of this kingdom against the fundamental laws and liberties of the same." Stair hesitated. His family was Presbyterian. He himself had all his life been a Presbyterian. "In the late troubles," he had for two years borne arms "for Christ's Crown and Covenant." He had, at one time, resolved to resign; but a slight concession from those in power sufficed to overcome his scruples. Lauderdale, who seems to have had as much liking for Stair as it was in his nature to have for any man, and who doubtless appreciated the value to the administration of Stair's character and abilities, stood his friend. He was summoned to London, and admitted to an interview with Charles, who possibly may have remembered with favour the secretary of Breda and the Hague. The result was a permission to accompany his signature of the Declaration with the verbal statement, that "he was content to declare against whatever was opposite to his Majesty's just right and prerogative." These words are no real qualification of the terms of the Declaration, and it is difficult to believe that any mind can have regarded the utterance of them as other than a farce.¹ To such paltering with conscience we prefer the frank readiness of Lauderdale to "sign a cartfull of such oaths before he would lose his place."

Stair was created President of the Court of Session, and made a member of the Privy Council in 1671. He held these offices for ten years—years during which, in the calm judgment of Hallam, the wicked-

¹ Very different from the qualification with which Burley took the test of drinking the health of the Primate of St. Andrews in Niel Blane's Change House—"May each prelate in Scotland soon be as the Right Reverend James Sharp." Well might Bothwell say, "I don't know what the devil the crop-eared Whig means."

ness of the administration can find no parallel in modern history. For this Mr. Mackay proposes no defence; Mr. Graham adopts the defence stated by Stair himself in his "Apology," which is simply that he did not approve of "severity against those who suffered for serving God in the way they were persuaded;" that he "did what he durst to save them." The defence is not very successful—especially when we consider the small result of his exertions. The distinction between commissions granted for the performance of necessary public duties and those which "relate to councils for establishing usurped power or burdening the people," by which Stair justified his holding office under Cromwell, cannot avail him in this matter. Lauderdale was then carrying out his scheme of subverting the Constitution and governing Scotland by the Privy Council, without a Parliament; and every one who sat with him in the Privy Council must be held responsible for the guilt of that scheme. No one would impute to Stair the malignity of the apostate Sharp, or the pleasure in human suffering which showed itself in the dark nature of James; but a dislike to witness the infliction of torture was a merit which he shared with the majority of his colleagues, and his preference for moderate counsels was only evinced by absence or silence. By the practice of such prudential arts no man can obtain exoneration from whatever blame may attach to the government of which, from motives of ambition or interest, he consents to be a member.

But the time had now come when caution and moderation could no longer avail. The Duke of York came to Scotland as Commissioner in 1679, animated, even then, by that determination to raise up Popery which in the end cost him his crown. It was soon apparent that any such design would be opposed by

all but the most subservient of Scottish statesmen. Stair, at his first interview with the Duke, gave offence by welcoming him to an "entirely Protestant country." He filled up the measure of his iniquity by carrying in Parliament an addition to the Test Act of 1681, defining the Protestant religion as "the religion contained in the Confession of Faith recorded in the first Parliament of James VI." He tells us that his object was "to provide the safest hedge against Popery ;" and this object was perfectly apprehended by James. Accordingly, Stair on going to London, either to obtain permission to take the test with a qualification, as he had done the Declaration of 1662, or, as some have said, with the view of securing for his more complaisant son the place which he foresaw he himself would have to resign, was, at the instance of the Duke of York, refused an audience of the King ; and a new Commission was issued in which his name did not appear. Stair assures us he would not have signed the test. Why a man who had signed the Declaration of 1662, and had been for ten years a member of the Privy Council, should have stickled at this test we are wholly unable to understand. But it is unsafe to pronounce judgment on matters of conscience—especially when the consciences are those of Scottish statesmen of the seventeenth century. The main fact is, that Government never offered him the chance of signing. To have done so would have been a farce. His ruin was determined on. Moderation, not unlike his own, had brought destruction on Argyll. The President's declared hostility to Popery was worse than moderation. His dismissal came from the same cause which, a few years later, raised Perth and Melfort over Queensberry : and which in England led to the downfall of the Hydes—the resolve of James to have in his service

no minister who would not do his bidding even in the matter of religious profession.

Stair retired to the country, but was not allowed to enjoy his retirement. The eye of the tyrant was upon him. In 1682 Claverhouse was sent to urge on the persecution in Wigtown and Galloway. Of course, he found cause of offence in everything done by the fallen President. It is half melancholy, half ludicrous, to read Stair's appeals to Queensberry, imploring favour, protesting loyalty, and remonstrating against being "disquieted" because his wife won't attend the parish church, which he plaintively adds, "I cannot help"—an inability easy of credence if the lady had any likeness to the mother of the bride of Lammermoor.¹ At last, acting on a friendly hint from Sir George Mackenzie, he fled to Holland.

At Leyden—fit refuge for an exiled scholar—Stair found a society, composed of the most eminent and learned men in Europe, ready to soothe his six years of banishment. Of his life there little is known. He gave himself to literary pursuits; he supported, in a languid way, the enterprise of Argyll: while resting his hopes, we can readily believe, on a very different deliverer. He, least of all men, was likely to have been led away by the proverbial credulity of exiles. He was recommended by Fagel to the notice of William, who soon saw and valued his cool sagacity. He entered eagerly into William's great design, professing himself willing to venture his head, his own and his children's fortunes, in such an undertaking—

¹ Mr. Mackay's biographical enthusiasm prompts him to stand up for Lady Stair. But he might have remembered that she is thus described by one of her descendants:—"In Lady Ashton the character of our great-great-grandmother seems in many respects more faithfully delineated, or at least, less misrepresented. She was an ambitious and interested woman, of a masculine character and understanding."—Letter from Mr. Dalrymple Elphinstone in the Introduction to "The Bride of Lammermoor."

a declaration the magnanimity of which is somewhat impaired by the fact that the family estates were perfectly safe in any event, being at that very time enjoyed by his eldest son, serving James as Lord Advocate and Lord Justice-Clerk. But William could not afford to look closely into such matters. He knew Stair was able; he had reason to believe him willing to serve the good cause. He, therefore, honoured him with much confidence, and took him over to England in the "Brill."

Here Stair's work as a statesman begins. He is said, indeed, to have shared the counsels of Monk before the march into England which restored the monarchy. But, with this exception, he had hitherto lived the life of a mere lawyer, avoiding, even to the disregard of duty, any part in state affairs. To such a course he had been led partly by timidity, partly because he disliked the governments he continued to serve. Both causes were now removed. His political views were in accord with the new order of things; there was no longer room for timidity: the only hope of safety to him or his lay in the stability of William's throne. Even now, however, the part which he took was not a public one. He lived in a beautiful villa on the banks of the Thames belonging to the widow of his old patron Lauderdale, and guided the deliberations of William on Scotch affairs by his experience and sagacity. He was, in the crisis of the Revolution, the confidential adviser Carstairs afterwards became. And, in truth, the sagacity which directed William in these things must have been sagacity of no common order. If, as there is every reason to believe, Stair suggested the mode in which the Convention which was to meet at Edinburgh should be summoned—in righteous disregard of existing laws; if, by his advice, nobles who had been deprived of their honours

by the tyranny of the Stuarts were invited to resume their seats in Parliament; if, by his advice, the franchise was so extended that none but Papists were excluded from the vote; if he had any share in William's letter to the Convention, when it did assemble, and in the private instructions sent to the friends of the Government, in which we see not only a statesmanlike view of the position, but an intimate and accurate knowledge of Scotch parties and of the Scotch character; then few advisers have ever given wiser counsel to a prince. Ecclesiastical matters presented, perhaps, the most serious and the most lasting difficulty. William was undoubtedly desirous that the Scotch should be induced to accept a moderate form of Episcopacy. The establishment of Presbytery in Scotland made every Scotch Episcopalian a Jacobite, and was, moreover, in the highest degree distasteful to English churchmen, high and low alike. Nor is it uncharitable to suppose that a prince as greedy of power as any who have ever governed England may have had some preference for a form of Church government which, to say the least, has always been associated with the ascendancy of the Crown. Stair, knowing Scotland, knew the maintenance of Episcopacy to be impracticable. Aided probably by Carstairs, he had little difficulty in bringing William to this opinion. But a further and most important object was that William should be saved from the unpopularity sure to be incurred by him in England were he to countenance the overthrow of Episcopacy in the North. The matter must be decided before he could have any say in it, or any title to interfere. Stair effected this by prevailing upon the managers of the Convention to insert a clause in the Claim of Right declaring Episcopacy an insupportable institution, odious to the nation, and which must be abolished.

William, therefore, if he accepted the Crown of Scotland at all, had no choice but to accept it on a contract of which this was the first condition.

It seems to have been undetermined whether Stair should be restored to his place as President, then held by Sir George Lockhart. In his "Apology" he says he would not have taken the place while Sir George lived ; adding, frankly enough, "nor had I any doubt but that the King would have provided me as well as by it." The murder of Lockhart in March 1689 removed all difficulty ; and Stair thus writes, with a certain half-sincerity, as to his own feelings at the time : "That shameful murder of Sir George Lockhart touched the King much, and made him say to me he saw it was necessary that I should resume my place again, which I was willing, though it was my right, he should continue to enjoy, being younger and abler to endure the toil than I."

Accordingly he was re-appointed President of the Court of Session, and held that office till his death in 1695. These years were certainly the most useful, and probably the happiest, of his life. He enjoyed the position which he preferred to any other ; he could, without scruple, take what part became him in public affairs. And the part from which he as a judge was debarred, he saw taken, with rare ability and energy, by his son. The attacks of numerous and bitter enemies had no effect on his fortunes, and were not, therefore, likely to disturb his cold and equable temper. Yet these attacks, both on the President and his son, were unexampled in persistency and malignancy. Politicians of every rank and every party were never weary of denouncing the Dalrymples as the cause of everything that was amiss in Scotland. Acts of Parliament were passed for the express purpose of driving them from office. But all was of no

avail. William refused his assent to the Acts, and showed the value he put upon the denunciations by raising the President to the peerage. One pamphlet, however, probably the joint work of the plotter Ferguson and the traitor Montgomery, could not, it was thought, even in the interest of Government, be left unnoticed. Accordingly Stair published a short reply, entitled "An Apology for Sir James Dalrymple, President of the Court of Session, by himself." The document may be read with interest, but does not materially affect our estimate of Stair. Some charges, mainly connected with legal matters, to which weight was no doubt attached at the time, but which are now utterly unimportant, he successfully refutes. To the graver charges of having supported the tyranny of Lauderdale, and of having been in public life "a Proteus and a changeling," no defence was possible; and the endeavour to maintain one discovers more ingenuity than candour or truthfulness.

The career of Sir John Dalrymple, the President's eldest son, shorter than that of his father, is marked by bolder features, and presents a more varied interest. Born in 1648, he was called to the Scotch bar soon after his father became Lord President in 1670. The first ten years after his call afforded little to vary the monotony of professional life; but in 1682 there came a change. In the autumn of that year the father fled to Holland; ere the close of it the son was denounced by Claverhouse before the Privy Council. He was accused of "leasing-making, sedition, perjury;" of having laughed at a proclamation; and of having offered Claverhouse a bribe of £150, "to connive at the irregularities of his mother the Lady Stair."¹ Dalrymple retorted with charges against

¹ Irregularities, of course, in matters ecclesiastical.

Claverhouse of oppression in Galloway, and of interference with the rights of heritable jurisdiction belonging to the Stair family. Fountainhall tells us there was "much transport, flame, and humour in this cause; and the cloud on the late President's family was taken advantage of now, which shows the world's instability."¹ The issue, of course, was never doubtful. Sir John (he had been knighted early in life) was committed to the Castle of Edinburgh "during pleasure," and fined £500. He was soon afterwards liberated on payment of the fine, and acknowledgment of his errors.

But the Council was bent on his ruin. Perhaps they discerned that the astute Dalrymples had devised, and were following out, a dexterous policy for preserving family estates in troublous times. The father took one side of politics, the eldest son the other; so that, in any event, forfeiture was avoided. This policy, less in the spirit of chivalry than in the spirit of old Milnwood's dying injunction to "keep the gear together," was, not to mention politicians of lesser rank, subsequently adopted by the noble houses of Hamilton, Queensberry, and Athole. But the Dalrymples are entitled to the credit of having invented it. So far back as Lord Stair's journey to London in 1681, he is said to have laid schemes for the succession of his son to the dignities which he saw he himself would be compelled to lay down—which of course implied the son's readiness to desert the politics of his father. Fountainhall distinctly says that this feeling was at the bottom of the proceedings now taken against Sir John: "The High Treasurer was incensed that Sir John would give them no discoveries against the Earl of Aberdeen; and that, by his father's retreat, he had secured the estate from their gripe."² In September

¹ "Decisions," vol. i. p. 201.

² *Ibid.* p. 303.

1684 he was seized in his own house at midnight, "without any shadow of ground," says Forbes, and brought before the Council sitting at Holyrood. No charge appears to have been preferred against him; but notwithstanding, "they caused bring him between a great guard of soldiers in open daylight, from the Abbey, on foot to the prison, like a malefactor."¹ They kept him there three months; then liberated him on bail for £500, confining him, however, to Edinburgh, and eventually to a circuit of ten miles round the city.

For three years this "cloud" hung over the House of Stair. But a change was at hand. Sir George Mackenzie, who had stuck at nothing else, could not brook the relaxation of the penal laws against the Catholics. In February 1687, Sir John Dalrymple succeeded him as Lord Advocate, receiving £1200 from the king—£500 being the fine exacted from him some years before, and £700 for the charges of the journey to London which had resulted in these happy arrangements—and a free pardon for all past offences of his father, mother, and his whole family, including, oddly enough, "a pardon to his little son, who had accidentally shot his brother."² Wodrow leaves "the springs of this change to the civil historian of the period;" and the civil historian of the period has not made much of the bequest. The following explanation, offered by one of the Master's kinsmen, is curious:—

"To these (Perth and Melfort) was joined Sir John Dalrymple, son of Lord Stair. This last minister had seen his father ruined by the king when Duke of York; and had himself, on account of his lenity to Nonconformists, been confined for many months in a common jail by the same prince. Yet he was now appointed Lord Advocate and

¹ Fountainhall, "Decisions," vol. i. p. 303.

² *Ibid.* p. 447.

Justice-Clerk, offices at that time of great political power, and a Privy Councillor. These preferences were bestowed upon him by the advice of Sunderland, who suggested that by his means an union between the Presbyterian and Popish parties in Scotland might be effectuated. Capricious favours, after capricious punishments, are insults. Sir John Dalrymple came into the king's service resolved to take vengeance if ever it should offer. Impenetrable in his designs, but open, prompt, and daring in execution, he acted in perfect confidence with Sunderland, to whom he was inferior in nothing and superior in eloquence."¹

In alluding to this matter, Mr. Story states, as a thing beyond doubt, that the Master's purpose in taking office "embraced revenge for the past injuries inflicted on himself and his family, and the overthrow of the despotism under which his country was ground down." We cannot feel constrained to adopt such a view. That Sir John Dalrymple may have been offered office at the instance of Sunderland is very likely. His temperament was not that of a persecutor; and for differences in religious persuasion he probably cared as little as Sunderland himself. To carry out the Government policy in relaxing the penal laws was in no way disagreeable to him; and Sunderland must have known that in the accomplished Scotsman he had a supporter on whom he could rely. Sir John could, with more propriety than most statesmen of the time, profess the motive averred by President Lockhart for the same line of conduct—that he had all his days fought against intolerance, and would not now resist a policy of tolerance because of dark designs suspected to be concealed under the offer of

¹ "Dalrymple Memoirs," part i. book 4, p. 72. In a note by the editor of the Oxford edition of "Burnet" (vol. iv. p. 42), it is stated that Sir John used subsequently to boast that he had advised James to repeal the Test Act in order to ruin him. No authority is given for the statement—in itself highly improbable.

such a blessing. Nothing, therefore, forces on us the belief that he took office with the treacherous purpose imputed to him. Evidence in support of the charge there is none. All the probabilities are against its truth. The mildness with which he discharged the duties of his office may in fairness be ascribed to good-nature rather than to slackness; and was indeed the wisest policy that could have been pursued in the interests of James. He had no part in the counsels of the Whigs who invited William over; and we may believe with certainty that the "perfect confidence" between him and Sunderland did not include a knowledge of the Treasurer's intrigues, through his wife's gallant, with the Hague.

Strangely enough, the author of the Dalrymple Memoirs seems quite unconscious of the infamy which his theory, if accepted, would attach to the memory of his kinsman. A statesman who—seeing a prince he has long served bent on courses fraught with ruin to himself and his adherents, and blind to the plainest consequences, deaf to all advice—stoops to treason in order to secure his own fortune or his neck, is bad enough. But to the baseness of seeking office with the set purpose of playing the traitor's part, and making destruction sure, and that from no deeper motive than a desire of revenge for a three months' imprisonment, few, even of the English or Scotch politicians of that time, would have been equal. Unscrupulous as Dalrymple was, nothing in his character justifies us, without the clearest evidence, in holding him capable of such pre-eminence in treachery, surpassing even the treachery of Sunderland.

In truth, Dalrymple's reasons are not hard to find. They were not lofty, though they fell far short of the iniquity ascribed to him. The Government desired

the services of the ablest man in Scotland. To gain this end they were prepared to take any means, fair or foul. Both were at their disposal. Dalrymple had, indeed, committed no legal offence ; but he had done worse—he had endeavoured to uphold the law against a prince determined to govern in defiance of all law. For this he had suffered already : he might expect suffering yet more severe. He was in the gripe of Perth and Melfort ; and in them was no mercy. On the other hand, honours, wealth, a pardon for all the offences of his House, were within his reach. His case was not singular. Government were at this very time in quest of a lawyer equal to the duties of Solicitor-General for England. Sir William Williams was constrained to accept that office by the same combination of influences which triumphed over the integrity of Dalrymple.

The Revolution came ; and Sir John Dalrymple, although he had not stooped to be a traitor, had little hesitation in being a turn-coat. He displayed all the energy of the class. He prepared and carried the resolution which declared that James had “ forfeited ” his throne ; he was one of the three commissioners appointed by the Estates to offer the crown to William and Mary ; and he was immediately thereafter restored to his former post of Lord Advocate. It is not, therefore, matter for surprise that, in 1690, he had the honour of being one of the six Scotchmen exempted from the Act of Indemnity then proposed to be granted by James. On the other hand, it is as little matter for surprise that his appointment was received by the Presbyterian leaders with even greater indignation than the appointment of his father to the office of President some months later. They resented it not less bitterly than the English Whigs resented the accession to office of Halifax and Danby, and, at

a later date, of Sunderland, and much for the same reasons. Sir Patrick Hume wrote to Melville stating that "there was great disgust against Sir John Dalrymple because he is brought in office." The disgust was very natural. Men who had been outlawed and proscribed; who had groaned under the boot and thumbscrew; who had been driven to hide in caves and vaults, and been half-starved in the garrets of Amsterdam or Leyden, could hardly, with equanimity, see the prosperity and advancement of men who had suffered nothing for the good cause, nay, who had held office during the "killing days," and had themselves taken part in those persecutions which cried aloud for vengeance. There can, however, be no doubt that William acted wisely. He took as ministers those who could serve him best—careless whether they had been Malignants in Scotland or Tories in England. His single aim was how the Government might be steered most skilfully through the difficulties which surrounded it; and, certainly, no man in Scotland was so fit to take the helm as Sir John Dalrymple.

He held office as Lord Advocate for about a year and a half. He had to encounter no feeble opposition. The enmity of the Jacobites was a thing of course; the sullen discontent of extreme Covenanters might have been expected. But there was added the malignancy of disappointed place-seekers; and the persistent hostility of a small but influential body who dignified their narrowness and national prejudices with the name of patriotism. Balcarras made common cause with Montgomery; Fletcher of Saltoun degraded himself to the level of that perverse prater Sir Patrick Hume. On the greater nobles the Government could not rely. Alone of his name Argyll stooped to treason; Hamilton was a greedy time-

server ; Athole a cowardly knave. Nor was the Secretary, Melville, a man who could give much aid. But, supported by the King, and counselled no doubt by his father, Sir John Dalrymple was more than a match for all opponents. During one stormy session the many-headed Opposition was triumphant. Firmness, judicious concessions, and a little judicious expenditure, gave the Government a majority in the next. The unnatural alliance between Presbyterians and Jacobites was dissolved ; “ the Club ” was broken up ; the ecclesiastical polity of the realm was settled, on the basis of 1592, in such a manner as to command the acquiescence, if not the approval, of reasonable men. Balcarras expressly attributes the victory of the Government to “ the great abilities of Sir John Dalrymple.” According to the same authority, these abilities displayed themselves in vehemence, not less than in dexterity of management. The oratorical treat enjoyed in the Scottish Parliament during these sessions he describes as hearing “ Duke Hamilton bawl and bluster after his usual manner, and Sir James Montgomery and Sir John Dalrymple scold like watermen.” Sir John afterwards thought it necessary to address a letter to the Commissioner apologising for the heat he had shown in debate.

In 1691, Dalrymple became joint-secretary for Scotland with Melville. Towards the close of the year Melville resigned ; and Johnston of Warriston succeeded him. To one of these joint-secretaries was intrusted the conduct of business in Edinburgh ; the other was in attendance at Court, and had the chief direction of affairs. The latter sphere of duty was assigned to the Master of Stair, as Dalrymple must now be called, his father having been raised to the peerage. He held office till the summer of 1695. During this time his attention was mainly occupied

with ecclesiastical affairs and the pacification of the Highlands.

William, as is well known, was not yet satisfied with the treatment the Episcopalians had received. His first wish was to continue Episcopacy in Scotland; short of this, he desired to obtain for Episcopalians the same toleration as was enjoyed by the Nonconformists in England, but that measure of justice the Presbyterian clergy refused to grant. During 1691-2, the King used all his influence to extort from the intolerant Church the concession that Episcopalians willing to take the oath of allegiance, and to subscribe the "Confession of Faith and the Shorter and Longer Catechisms," should be admitted to communion. Many Episcopalians were heartily desirous to come in on those terms. But the Assembly of 1692 opposed a dogged resistance; and was in consequence dissolved, not without reproaches, by the Royal Commissioner. In this enlightened policy the King was cordially supported by his latitudinarian Secretary. Mr. Graham has published some interesting letters from the Master to the Earl of Lothian—the Commissioner—in which he expresses a very frank disapproval of the Presbyterian leaders:—

"I do agree with your Lordship those people are neither tractable nor grateful, but yet they have something that one would not do well to destroy them, though he can neither manage nor oblige them. Something must be done to hinder them to come themselves to confound the civil government, but I shall never be accessary either to subvert their constitution or to bring them to scaffolds, though really they do some things so intolerable that they must be used as mad bodies and put up in a Bedlam if they continue their rabbling and protestations."

The English politicians of the time were not very zealous or very faithful; yet they struck the Master

as presenting a favourable contrast to his countrymen :—

“ They (the English Parliament) are full of overtures and displeasure for the success of affairs this season, and the allies lying by ; but after some time spent in stuff they will come to give competent supplies, I hope, for really the bulk of this nation are affectioned to the Government, and sensible of the security they enjoy both of their religion and property. *I wish it were as well with us (in Scotland), who talk more of religion and consider it less.*”

Matters came to a crisis in 1693. The Parliament of that year passed two Acts—one imposing on all persons in positions of public trust, and among these, on all the clergy, Presbyterian and Episcopal, an oath acknowledging William as King *de jure* and *de facto*; another requiring that all Episcopalian clergy who should take this oath, subscribe the Confession, and recognise the Presbyterian form of Church government, should be entitled to be members of the Church Courts. The Presbyterian clergy, in pretence at least, objected to the Oath of Assurance, as it was called, more vehemently than to the admission of their Episcopalian brethren. They loudly professed that to take such an oath, especially at the dictation of Parliament, was Erastianism, a bowing down to “ Cæsar,” a recognition of the supremacy of the civil power in matters ecclesiastical. Yet it may well be doubted whether even the small indulgence extended to Episcopalians was not, in reality, the cause of their noisy opposition. The King at first was firm ; members of the Assembly of 1695 must take the oath, or the Assembly would be dissolved. Readers of Scottish history are familiar with the story how Carstairs returned suddenly to Court—learned the position of affairs—detained the despatches—woke the King at midnight to seek his pardon and obtain a reversal of his policy, and suc-

ceeded in both objects. The romantic touches in this story are doubted by the best historians ; but that the orders were recalled, and a serious collision between the Church and the Crown averted, was no doubt in great measure owing to the influence of Carstairs.

The part taken by the Secretary in this matter cannot be ascertained with certainty. Mr. Story implies that the King was influenced against the clergy by his "cool and selfish judgment." With greater accuracy Mr. Graham points out that the name of the Secretary does not appear in any letters, despatches, or records in connection with the question. Without doubt his father, the Lord President, and Tarbat, then leading men in the Privy Council, urged the King to persevere in enforcing the Acts of the Parliament ; but the Secretary may well be believed to have paused. His letters to Lord Lothian show that, though he had no love for the extreme Presbyterians, he both respected and feared them ; and personal feeling may have aided prudence in leading him to the conviction that the wisest course would be to leave the ecclesiastical polity of the country undisturbed, as it had been settled by his exertions in 1690 ; and such was, in fact, the result of the struggle.

Whoever may have counselled the King to yield, there is room to doubt whether they rendered a real service to the Church or the Crown. The question was of importance to William, for every Episcopalian parson who signed the Declaration required by Parliament was a rebel the less. Maintaining, as he was, the authority of the Estates, he had nothing to fear from the discontents of an intolerant priesthood ; even had the Presbyterian laity been alienated, there would have been no danger to his throne in such a quarrel. For any disaffection of the laity would have

been temporary. They never, as was shown again and again, could have made common cause with the Jacobites. The King would have his way at last ; and if at the cost of an enforced silence of some duration on the Assembly, the country would probably have been resigned. On the other hand, the Church would have gained by the admission into her brotherhood of moderate Episcopalians ; and had she been then forced to face the difficulties of the relations of the civil power to the Church, she would have been saved from the fictitious position she has always maintained on this point ; and which, like all fictitious positions, has been to her a constant source of weakness. In truth, neither intellectually nor morally were the clerical leaders at this time worthy of their opportunities. They are thus described, with great severity, by Burnet :—

“ The truth was, the Presbyterians, by their violence and other foolish practices, were rendering themselves both odious and contemptible ; they had formed a General Assembly, in the end of the former year, in which they did very much expose themselves by the weakness and peevishness of their conduct ; little learning or prudence appeared among them ; poor preaching and wretched haranguing, partialities to one another, and injustice to those who differed from them, showed themselves in all their meetings.”
—P. 75.

No doubt, while we condemn the treatment of the Episcopalians by the Kirk, we must remember what Presbyterians had been made to suffer. “ It is not,” as has been well said, “ under rulers like Lauderdale and Dundee that men learn lessons of toleration.” The Episcopalians reaped far less than they had sown. History, we think, records no other instance where so much had been endured, where the retaliation was so gentle. But no credit for this can, with truth, be

given to the Scottish clergy, or the ordinary run of Scottish statesmen. The temper of the party who then held the ascendancy in Church and State may be gathered from the persecutions of witches, the murder of Aitkenhead, the opposition even to the measure of indulgence extended to Episcopalians by the Toleration Act of Anne—an opposition which, it is melancholy to think, was headed by Carstairs.¹ Had not that temper been restrained by William and his latitudinarian ministers, and especially the Dalrymples, the triumph of freedom in Scotland would have been stained by many a dark deed of revenge and intolerance.

To the Dalrymples then, supported no doubt in the closet by Carstairs, we mainly owe it that Presbyterianism was established at the Revolution, and established in justice and moderation. It is not a debt to be estimated lightly. Lord Macaulay has shown, in a striking passage, that the whole Empire has cause for thankfulness that Episcopacy was not forced upon an unwilling nation, and the ecclesiastical future of Scotland made as that of Ireland. The high intelligence which has long distinguished, and still distinguishes, the lower classes of Scotland must be mainly ascribed to her system of education—also, it is to be remembered, the work of the Revolution era. But we are persuaded that much may, with justice, be attributed to the Presbyterian form of Church government, especially taken in connection with the Calvinistic creed. The apprehension of that creed cannot fail to stimulate the mind; the working of that form of government has accustomed Scotsmen of every rank to look upon it as a right and a duty

¹ It is among Mr. Story's many misconceptions of historical truth that he defends this opposition as dictated by the same spirit as the resistance of Liberals in 1687 to the dispensing power claimed by James.

to exercise their judgments on questions involving, directly or indirectly, the most important subjects of human thought. The Presbyterian polity has also tended to foster that liberality of opinion in secular politics which prevails among the middle and lower classes in Scotland. Such must of necessity be the influence of a Church strictly democratic in its constitution, recognising within itself no distinction of persons, no grades of rank or office. This liberalising tendency of Presbyterianism has been increased by an indirect yet powerful cause. When the stormy times passed away, the bulk of the Scottish nobility and gentry revealed themselves Episcopalians. The people, hating Episcopacy, became alienated from their superiors. This was, in Scotland, a great change. Poverty, the slow development of trade, partly, too, the national disposition, long kept the commonalty of Scotland under the influence of the higher classes of society to an unseemly and unhealthy extreme. This has now, in great measure, passed away. That the severance which has taken place has been widened by religious differences no careful observer can doubt; it is to this day most discernible in those parts of Scotland where Presbyterianism has firmest hold. The present state of things is less consistent with sentimental theories of society than the former; but a change is not to be regretted which has, beyond doubt, fostered manliness of character and independence of thought among the body of the people.

This settlement had another consequence—which would have been deplored by its authors—the early rise and great influence of Dissent in Scotland as compared with England. Presbyterianism, in the day of its power, was no whit more tolerant than Episcopacy. Rather, indeed, less so. The freedom of speculation, now alleged to be enjoyed by the

clergy of the Kirk, is, if it does really exist, a thing of yesterday. But the system, as has been said, is more favourable to independence of thought; and this being so, the greater the intolerance the more certain the schism. This inherent tendency of Presbyterianism was increased by the peculiar character of the settlement carried through by William's ministers. The settlement was essentially a compromise, embracing, on the one hand, many who cherished Episcopacy in their hearts, and on the other, zealots prepared to enforce the Covenant upon all, and who joined the communion with that very purpose. On the Scotch temperament, hardened as it was by years of strife and suffering, such a compromise could have no permanent hold. Mr. Burton, than whom there is no higher authority on such a point, seems to think that the repeated dissents which have marked the history of the Scottish Church had their origin rather in doctrinal differences, vainly thought by the comprehensiveness of the Revolution Settlement to have been laid at rest, than in the Patronage Act of Anne. And the practical effect of those disruptions has been that, at the present day, dissenters in Scotland are comparatively more numerous, wield more political power, and stand higher in social regard, than their English brethren.

But even more than ecclesiastical difficulties the state of the Highlands was a cause of anxiety to the Secretary. His correspondence is full of the subject; the importance and difficulty of which he alone, among the statesmen of the time, would seem to have fully apprehended. His earlier views were worthy of his far-sighted sagacity, and pointed to nothing less than the abortive crime which was the actual issue. The theme of Glencoe is something worn; but Mr. Graham's publication invites a brief con-

sideration of the part taken in the business by the Master of Stair.

Mr. Graham maintains that the Master was "unconscious of the unjustifiable severity and atrocity of the act he authorised;" and that he would not have sanctioned the manner of the massacre. He quotes as evidence of this two letters from the Secretary to Colonel Hill, which will hardly serve his purpose. One of these refers only, and refers not very honestly, to the charge that the Macdonalds had been murdered *after* they had taken the oath of allegiance; the other is a letter intended to set at rest Hill's feelings of remorse, fully approving all that had been done, and ending with the remarkable words, "When you do right, you need fear nobody." These very letters plainly show the Secretary to have been an accessory after the fact. But we must take with them the tenor of his whole correspondence; his directions for securing the passes; his cautions against allowing the least alarm to be excited; his expressions of satisfaction in the thought that the inclemency of the weather would complete what of the bloody work might be left undone. It does not, indeed, appear that the plan of murder determined on was communicated to the Secretary; personally he would have shrunk from the base treachery of which his subordinates were not ashamed; but it is impossible to dispute that his instructions entitled those subordinates to adopt any means, however base and treacherous, which they thought best adapted to secure the "suddenness and secrecy" so carefully enjoined.

Patriotic Scotch writers have endeavoured to shift the blame from the Secretary to the King. Thus, Mr. Mackay will have it that the terms of William's order justified all that took place. He rejects, in one confident sentence, Lord Macaulay's argument, that

the order might have been signed by William in a perfectly legitimate meaning, and with a perfectly legitimate purpose. We wish he had given his reasons ; for we find it hard to understand how an order to “extirpate a gang of thieves” is in itself a wrong order ; or how it can, fairly construed, be held to authorise that even thieves are to be deluded by feigned friendship, by acceptance of hospitality, by lying protestations and false conviviality, and then assassinated in their beds. That William was prepared to visit with severity such marauding clans as should not have taken the oath within the required time is probable enough ; but the order which he signed at its worst meant no more than the original proclamation. It meant far less than the letters of fire and sword which had for centuries been, in the times of Scotland’s beloved native princes, a species of legal process, repeatedly used against Highland Septs—especially against the clan MacGregor, in 1563, in 1589, and in 1603. The Commission of 1695 reported, as is well known, “that there was nothing in the King’s instructions to warrant the committing of the foresaid slaughter, even as to the thing itself, and far less as to the manner of it.” But this does not at all embarrass Mr. Mackay, who gets over it by the easy assertion, that “the efforts of the Commission were directed to whitewash the King and incriminate the Master of Stair.” Such an assertion is wholly unwarranted. Few public documents have been subjected to a severer scrutiny than the report in question ; and it has stood that scrutiny well. The tone of the document is calm and passionless. The evidence is ably digested, and stated, as is allowed by the most violent partisans, with perfect fairness. Mr. Mackay himself admits that the Commissioners have given, fully and fairly, the grounds of the opinion

which they formed ; and he is not entitled, because that opinion does not commend itself to his views, to accuse the authors of a state paper, conceived in such a spirit, of unjust efforts to arrive at a foregone conclusion.

The Secretary is best defended, not by imputing to others blame which truly rests with him, but by considering his motives, and the circumstances with which he was called upon to deal. There are many who, on Celtic matters, will give no heed to Lord Macaulay or Mr. Burton, but few will dispute the authority of Bailie Nicol Jarvie, who thus describes the state of the Highlands in 1715 :—

“ ‘ In the name of God ! ’ said I, ‘ what *do* they do, Mr. Jarvie ? It makes me shudder to think of their situation.’

“ ‘ Sir,’ replied the Bailie, ‘ ye wad maybe shudder mair if ye were living near-hand them. For, admitting that the tae half of them may make some little thing for themsells honestly in the Lowlands by shearing in harst, droving, hay-making, and the like ; ye hae still mony hundreds and thousands o’ lang-legged Hieland gillies that will neither work nor want, and maun gang thigging and sorning about on their acquaintance, or live by doing the laird’s bidding, be’t right or be’t wrang. And mair especially, mony hundreds o’ them come down to the borders of the low country, where there’s gear to grip, and live by stealing, reiving, lifting cows, and the like depredations—a thing deplorable in ony Christian country!—the mair especially, that they take pride in it, and reckon driving a spreagh (whilk is, in plain Scotch, stealing a herd of nowte) a gallant, manly action, and mair befitting of pretty men (as sic reivers will ca’ themsells) than to win a day’s wage by ony honest thrift. And the lairds are as bad as the loons ; for if they dinna bid them gae reive and harry, the deil a bit they forbid them ; and they shelter them, or let them shelter themsells, in their woods, and mountains, and strongholds, whenever the thing’s dune. And every ane o’ them will maintain as mony o’ his ane name, or his clan, as we say,

as he can rap and rend means for; or, whilk's the same thing, as mony as can in ony fashion, fair or foul, mainteen themselfs; and there they are wi' gun and pistol, dirk and dourlach, ready to disturb the peace o' the country whenever the laird likes; and that's the grievance of the Hielands, whilk are, and hae been for this thousand years by-past, a bike o' the maist lawless unchristian limmers that ever disturbed a dounce, quiet, God-fearing neighbourhood, like this o' ours in the west here."

Things were certainly no better in 1692. Alone of the statesmen of his time, the Secretary appreciated the enormity of this evil. He saw that such a population would never be at peace; that its existence was in truth "a thing deplorable in ony Christian country." He opposed, from the first, Tarbat's scheme of pacifying the Highlands by grants of money. He rightly judged that such a remedy could have a temporary effect only. So long as money was forthcoming the country would enjoy quiet; so soon as the payments should cease, Highland Jacobitism would become an active passion. He saw that the only adequate remedy was to enforce, with a high hand, order and obedience to law; and to draft off a large portion of a population more than double what could be maintained in the country by the arts of industry and peace, and kept up by rival chiefs from pride and for purposes of rapine. In other words, there should have been done then what was long afterwards accomplished by the severities of Cumberland and the happy conception of Chatham. That the Master of Stair, had the means been at his disposal, would have pacified the Highlands with all the vigour of Cumberland is certain, and that he would not have shrunk from any of the severities of Cumberland is more than probable. And if in 1692 the Highlands had been occupied by troops and subjected to military

law ; if forts had then been built and roads made ; had the leading freebooters been shipped off to America, after the fashion in which Henry Cromwell dealt with Irishmen certainly not more guilty of offences against law and order ; had the active youth been sent to serve in the Low Countries, and the whole clan system broken up ; how rapid would have been the advance of the country in prosperity and happiness, how many miseries would have been spared, how much of noble and innocent blood had never flowed. To have adopted such a course, without bribing the rebel chiefs into a simulated submission, and receiving from them an oath of allegiance which everybody knew to be worthless, would have been wise and salutary, if severe, statesmanship. And a consideration of the whole evidence would seem to show that some such scheme had been originally present to the mind of the Secretary. That in his letters he often uses language evincing a preference for harsh modes of coercion is true ; but there can, we think, be little doubt that, had a comprehensive scheme of this character been adopted, its very completeness would have gone far to induce a man of large views and kindly disposition to forego unnecessary cruelty. Unquestionably to carry out this policy would not have been work for a squeamish statesman. One essential part of it, the diminution of more than a half of the existing Highland population, could hardly have been accomplished by gentle means. Yet, on the whole, the human suffering would have been little compared with the miseries of two rebellions ; and these would never have occurred had the Master of Stair "pacified" the Highlands according to his own views in 1692.

Foiled in his statesmanlike purpose, the Secretary turned savagely on the victims who had been brought

into his grasp by foolish pride on their own part and wicked chicanery on his. His hatred of the Highland race was now inflamed by disappointment at losing such an opportunity of rendering a permanent service to his country. These feelings, of mixed good and evil, led him not only to forget humanity, but, as we think, to commit an error in statecraft. Failing a comprehensive policy applicable to the whole Highlands, the proceedings taken against the Macdonalds were, in the lowest point of view, not worth while. Had every man of them been shot down, no lasting good would have been effected, no real advance made towards the pacification of the Highlands; and the idea of striking terror by the example was, as the result showed, an utter delusion.

The comparative impunity of the actors in this great crime has been made ground of heavy reproach against William. The Estates of Scotland, in their address to the Crown, urged, absurdly enough, that the officers in command should be prosecuted criminally, but left Stair to be dealt with as the King might think fit. Making every allowance for the subserviency of a Scottish Parliament to rank and place, and for their indifference to the lives of a few Highlanders, the fact that a man, hated by so many enemies, and who had given such occasion to that hatred, should have escaped so lightly, affords striking evidence of the high estimation in which the capacity and services of the Secretary must have been held. To have prosecuted soldiers who merely obeyed orders would have been inconsistent with all public policy; but how to deal with the Master was matter of difficulty. William was content to dismiss him from office—a lenity condemned by Lord Macaulay as “a fault amounting to a crime.” And, three years later, when, on the death of his father, he had become Viscount

Stair, special letters of remission passed the Great Seal in his favour. The letters ran :—

“His Majesty, considering that John Viscount of Stair hath been employed on his service for many years, and in several capacities—first, as his Majesty’s Advocate, and thereafter as Secretary of State—in which eminent employments persons are in danger, either by exceeding or coming short of their duty, to fall under the severity of law, and become obnoxious to prosecutions or troubles therefor ; and his Majesty being well satisfied that the said John Viscount Stair hath rendered him many painful services, and being well assured of his affections and good intentions, and being graciously pleased to pardon, cover, and secure him, now, after the demission of his office and that he is divested of public employment, from all questions, prosecutions, and trouble whatsoever ; and particularly his Majesty, considering that the manner of execution of the men of Glencoe was contrary to the laws of humanity and hospitality—being done by those soldiers who, for some days before, had been quartered amongst them, and entertained by them, which was a fault in the actors or those who gave the immediate orders on the place—but that the said Viscount of Stair being at London, many hundred miles distant, he could have no knowledge of nor accession to the method of that execution ; and his Majesty being willing to pardon, forgive, and remit any excess of zeal, as going beyond his instructions, by the said John Viscount Stair, and that he had no hand in the barbarous manner of execution : his Majesty therefore ordains a letter of remission to be made and passed the Great Seal of his Majesty’s ancient kingdom, etc.”

This paper is a curious one, and it would be interesting to know by whom it was drawn up ; the more so, as the tenor of the argument suggests the idea that it may have been intended, under cover of exculpating the Secretary, to state reasons why no complicity in the guilt of the massacre should attach to the King. But whatever we think of William’s position in the matter, the attempted defence of the

Secretary is a hopeless failure. The reasons given for the royal clemency are inconsistent even with lenient censure of the Estates; are in defiance of the just condemnation of the Commission; and, as William must have known, if he read the documents transmitted to him from Edinburgh, are altogether at variance with the truth.

At the same time, we cannot concur with Lord Macaulay's view that the Secretary should have been brought to trial, as a common murderer, before the criminal court; and should, if found guilty, have "died the death of a felon." Such a course may, perhaps, have been demanded by the strictness of criminal justice. But men in high places, caring for great interests, tried by the severest of all temptations to comprehensive intellects—the temptation to seize any means towards the attainment of important and beneficial ends, have a claim to be judged on broader principles. The great historian, on this occasion, allows no place to the doctrine of "set-off," the application of which, in political causes, no one has enforced more strongly than himself. Services rendered to the State may be justly pleaded in such causes; and, what is even a more important principle, the motive which dictated the act for which a politician is called in question is entitled to the greatest weight in determining the true measure of his guilt. The Master of Stair rendered many and great services to the State; and the motive which prompted his Highland policy was no vulgar one. It was not cupidity. It was not love of power. The crime which has blackened his name added not a shilling to his fortune; it could by no possibility have advanced him in the path of ambition. And of this he seems to have been thoroughly aware. There is no room for the insinuation, made by a reviewer in the "Times" of September last, that he

acted his part with a view to his own advancement ; that he was merely playing a card in the political game. His sagacity was never so deluded. He knew he had many and vindictive enemies, and he knew the handle he was giving them. It is not too much to say that the tone of his letters to Colonel Hill is that of a man conscious of his own rectitude, yet fully aware that he had much to fear from the prejudices or weakness of mankind. He was animated, so far as we can now judge, simply by misdirected public spirit. He was fully persuaded, nor was his persuasion wrong, that peace and prosperity would never be known to his country until the supremacy of law was established among those freebooting mountaineers. In his comprehension of the magnitude of the existing evil he was superior to any statesman of his time. Unhappily, this feeling had obtained such power over his mind that he became utterly reckless as to means if only a cure could be effected. Nay, it may be said, we fear, with truth, that long brooding over the lawlessness of the Highlands had brought him to such a state that he would have shrunk from no extreme of severity. Still, though his heart was hardened, his conscience silenced, even his acute judgment warped, it is no exaggeration to say that he was throughout it all animated by a sincere desire for the permanent good of his country. To have sent this man to a felon's death because he might with legal truth have been held guilty of the crime of murder, would have been to violate the principles by which such cases should be determined, not less than if Warren Hastings had been hanged because of the horrors inflicted on Rohilcund.

That William, on this occasion, extended an undue indulgence to crimes committed in his service, may have left a stain upon his fame, but was certainly for-

fortunate for Scotland. Stair's subsequent public life was short but eventful. He did not take his seat in Parliament till the year 1700. He was sworn a Privy Councillor on the accession of Anne in 1702. He rendered important services in the last session of the old Parliament of William, facilitating the passing of Acts recognising the title of Anne, confirming the Presbyterian form of Church government, and empowering the Crown to appoint Commissioners to treat for a union of the kingdoms. By his exertions in support of that measure the Earl of Stair, for to that rank he was elevated by the Godolphin Ministry, earned an enduring title to the gratitude of his countrymen. He was, says De Foe, "an eminent instrument in carrying on the Union." To that end he devoted all his astuteness in counsel, all his unrivalled powers of debate. His was the device which baffled the Opposition by appointing a majority of the Commissioners from their ranks; his were the arguments which secured the rejection of the limitations which a party of pestilent oligarchs, led by Fletcher, sought to impose on the prerogatives of the Crown. So far as we can now judge, to him more than to any other man Scotland owes the blessings which have flowed from that great measure. On the 7th of January 1707, after a stormy and exhausting debate, the last important article of the Treaty was carried. In that debate Stair took a leading part, and then, worn out by the long struggle now at last brought to a successful issue, he went home to die. He died at the post of duty not less surely than the soldier struck down on the field; and the man who thus spent himself for the good of the commonwealth, whatever may have been his errors or his crimes, deserves the lenient judgment of history.

The characters of these men present features of dis-

similarity and likeness curiously interwoven. That of the father is the more difficult to estimate aright. Every reader is familiar with Lord Macaulay's brilliant sketch. That sketch by no means satisfies Mr. Mackay, who, we regret to see, has taken up a line, popular with clever young men at present, that of pecking at the reputation of Lord Macaulay. In one place he accuses the historian of "selecting from every quarter the blackest colours to paint the character of Stair, the father of the man destined to be the scapegoat for the massacre of Glencoe." A graver charge could hardly be made; and the only justification for it is that Macaulay, in alluding to the "heart-rending tales" which the calamities of the house of Stair had furnished to novelists and poets, has adopted Sir Walter Scott's version of the tragedy of "The Bride of Lammermoor"! Nor is Mr. Mackay at all correct in his assertions that the traditions of this tragic event have come to us "chiefly from the fierce antagonists of the Dalrymples." The general truth of the story, as told by Scott, is acknowledged in the Introduction to "The Bride of Lammermoor," by the great-great-grandson of Stair; and the version of the final catastrophe adopted by the novelist is the most probable, and by no means the most malicious, of the many traditions which have been current.

In another place Mr. Mackay has permitted himself to write thus: "Macaulay has drawn chiefly from these satirists all the charges his enemies made against Stair, and without examining their truth has insinuated others for which even satire gave no foundation." And then he quotes the powerful sketch we have referred to from the third volume of the history. Now such an accusation should have been carefully substantiated. There is hardly an attempt to do so on any point deserving of the smallest consideration.

There are a few critical notes which we must take leave to characterise as exceedingly silly. For example: Lord Macaulay ascribes to Stair "a wonderful power of giving to any proposition which it suited him to maintain a plausible aspect of legality and even of justice; and this power he frequently abused." Instead of attempting to controvert this, Mr. Mackay demolishes the historian by the profound query—"How could such a power—if he really possessed it—be only frequently abused?" No single charge contained in the whole passage is shown to be without foundation. Two efforts are made in this direction, from the frivolous character of which the critic's inability to bring forward any serious instances may be fairly inferred. The historian writes: "He protested, and perhaps with truth, that his hands were pure from the blood of the persecuted Covenanters." The note here is: "No ground for this 'perhaps' has been discovered." Surely it is no very harsh measure thus to qualify such an asseveration on the part of a man who was a member of the Privy Council during the administration of Lauderdale. Indeed there is a sense, and that not of a highly strained morality, in which any man who then held such office may be deemed altogether guilty of the innocent blood which was shed. In his next point Mr. Mackay is yet more unfortunate. He challenges Lord Macaulay's statement that Stair's fellow-exiles regarded him with suspicion. Now it is quite certain that by a large section of the Presbyterian party Stair was never trusted. Not to multiply authorities, this is distinctly stated by Balcarras, and indicated, not obscurely, by Forbes of Culloden, the one a Jacobite, the other a Presbyterian; and, though we fear Mr. Mackay will despise such an authority, Sir Walter Scott, in the "Tales of a Grandfather," describes Stair and his son

as "men of high talent but of doubtful integrity; and odious to the Presbyterians for compliances with the late Government." We make these remarks in no unfriendly spirit. But if Mr. Mackay is ever to fulfil, as there is reason to hope he may, the promise which this book, with all its faults, affords, he must study the principles of historical evidence; he must keep present to his mind the difference between facts and opinions; he must be less hasty in his conclusions, and more sparing in imputations; and, we are constrained to add, he must be careful to observe modesty and moderation of tone when he chances to differ from writers of established fame.

It will be found, we suspect, that in this, as in most of his judgments on character, Lord Macaulay, making due allowance for habitual force of expression, is not far from the truth. We quite concur with Mr. Mackay in thinking that our estimate of Stair should be little affected by the malignant attacks of which he was so long the object. And we would record our dissent from a condemnation of both father and son which has received publicity and authority from the "Times."¹

"Even in an age when ideas of political morality were singularly loose, and when the most shameless time-serving was the habit of the most eminent statesmen, the versatile Dalrymples had to support an exceptional weight of obloquy. If their enemies attacked them with unusual bitterness, gloating with exultant malignity over a painful succession of domestic misfortunes, we may take it that there was some exceptional reason for it. . . . They had most exceptional opportunities of being false alike to their friends and their principles; and the result was that in the end they were neither loved nor even trusted, except by those who, for the moment, had common interests with them."

¹ "Times," September 3, 1875.

That both Dalrymples were false to their principles so far as to hold office under administrations of which they disapproved, is true enough. But was there anything "exceptional" in this? What was such a measure of falsity, for example, compared with the falsity of Lauderdale, or the apostasy of Perth? That they were false to their friends, in any practical way, is unsupported by evidence. We should not like to dogmatise about "love" among Scottish politicians of that time; but so far from not having been trusted, it was the trust so often and so long reposed in the Dalrymples which excited the enmity against them. To infer extreme depravity on the part of the Dalrymples because of the hatred they inspired shows utter ignorance of the period. The only "exceptional reason" for that hatred was their "growing greatness," and their zeal for the true interests of the country. They were hated by a proud, poor, greedy aristocracy; despising them as new men, unable to estimate their services, envious of the knowledge and capacity which had raised them to the level of Hamilton and Athole. They were the first in Scotland who had so raised themselves; and the whole body of the secondary nobility, who regarded the conduct of political affairs as their exclusive right, and in such a rise not only felt their own immediate defeat in the race for place and power, but foresaw the permanent weakening of their order, hated them accordingly. Suppose politicians as they were, treachery was never brought home to them. Of the father it may especially be said that, while he served many masters, he was faithful to them all. We do not ascribe to him the lofty integrity of Nottingham or Somers; but fidelity even such as his was then rare in England, and unknown among the false, shameless leaders of Scottish political parties in an age when, for the first and last

time, treason to the cause of Protestantism and freedom stained the honoured name of Argyll.

On the other hand, it is impossible to accept Mr. Mackay's estimate of his hero. The praises of Wodrow, and a few clerical admirers of Stair's "shining piety," cannot outweigh the all but unanimous verdict of contemporaries; the deliberate judgments of Burnet, Scott, and Woodhouselee.¹ The actions of his life, indeed, describe him best—even as stated and defended by himself. A cruel or vindictive man he was not. But he was subtle and crafty; greedy of place—though there were lengths to which, even for the sake of place, he would not go. It is difficult to acquit him of servility to Lauderdale; and when he describes his patron as "most zealous for his country," and as having come to be in difficulties "on account of his favouring the phanatics," he wrote what he must have known to be untrue. In his "Apology" he boasts that he never took a bribe—a height of judicial rectitude to which there is reason to believe he really attained. In his reports of two cases, Fountainhall insinuates that the President was thought to have been actuated by improper influences. The authority of Fountainhall is deservedly high; but he does not state the charge as matter of his own belief, still less of his own knowledge; and, on the whole, not in such a way as to force a conviction of the guilt of Stair. He did much to reform procedure, especially during his first tenure of the Presidency; but towards the end of his life, there arose on all sides violent outcries against his conduct of the business of the Court; and it has been made matter of reproach against him that Acts of Parliament were required to set right

¹ Burnet calls him "a cunning man;" Scott doubts his integrity; Woodhouselee imputes "turbulent ambition and crafty policy" both to father and son.

abuses—such as altering judgments, hearing cases with closed doors, etc.—which should have been put an end to by the Court itself. It is very probable that Stair had not sufficient strength of character to effect, by his own influence, the required changes. Down to the present day the Court of Session has been too chary about reforming itself; too prone to wait for the interference of the Legislature. Whether this strange timidity has arisen from ignorance of the evils, or from that contentment with things as they are which naturally steals over the judicial mind, we cannot say; but it has often brought the Court into great unpopularity with the country, and then some reckless Government forces on hasty, ill-considered changes in obedience to popular clamour. There are many who allege that such is the state of matters at this very time. But for Stair's weakness there was much excuse. The root of the evils with which he had to deal was judicial corruption; and that was, in his day, so widespread that he may reasonably have believed it incapable of cure otherwise than by legislative enactment. And the fact that, even after Parliamentary interference, the taint of corruption clung to the Scottish Bench for upwards of a century, goes far to establish the correctness of such a belief. As a law-maker Stair did little. The one important measure connected with his name is the Act regulating the mode of executing deeds—an Act which, at least as interpreted by subsequent decisions, grievously needs amendment. The legal achievement which principally marks his epoch was the Entail Act of 1685. From any share in the discredit of having imposed entails on Scotland exactly 400 years after the English nobles had inflicted this evil on their country, and more than 200 years after the boldness of the English judges had found out a remedy,

Stair must be acquitted. He was in Holland when the Act was passed ; and he has left on record his strong disapproval of its policy. That responsibility must be borne by Sir George Mackenzie ; who, had he also realised his endeavours to abolish juries in criminal cases, would have left behind him a work of mischief, worthy, in its completeness and far-reaching power for evil, even of his reputation.

Stair was a considerable author. His speculations on physics were behind his age. "The Lord Chancellor," said Harvey of Bacon, "writes on science like a Lord Chancellor ;" and the sarcasm may be applied, with greater force, to the writings of Stair. His religious meditations will hardly now be read save from curiosity. But, as a jurist, he has left an illustrious name. His "Institutions of the Law of Scotland" is a remarkable work. The historical part is weak, especially as regards the old Common Law of Scotland, and the introduction of the civil jurisprudence ; points full of interest, and in Stair's day possibly within reach of zealous inquiry. But the value of the historical method was not, in that age, understood. Again, he lends his authority to those extreme views of the royal prerogative, or more strictly, of the royal power, which were insisted on by the Scotch lawyers after the union of the crowns, at variance with the free spirit of Scottish Constitutional Law. His style has received an admiration which we cannot but think excessive. In his preface he warns his readers not to expect a "quaint and gliding style," still less "flourishes of eloquence." But he avoids, only too successfully, the error of that lucidity of diction, the charm of which, in some writers, lays such hold on the reader's mind, and so carries him along, as under a spell, that he sometimes fails to grasp the true reach of the thought. Stair's style has,

no doubt, a force and dignity befitting his subject ; but it is cumbrous, and often complicated, even to obscurity. The frequency of his allusions to the law of Moses, and to the Bible generally, is not edifying, and certainly not instructive ; indeed his fondness for sacred sanctions has led him into a serious error of classification. Yet the scope and execution of the work entitle him to a high place among jurists. Scott expresses regret that “his powerful mind was unhappily exercised on so limited a subject as Scottish jurisprudence.” The limits of a subject, however, depend not a little on the mode of treatment. Stair’s work is not a mere compendium of Scotch law. As such, indeed, it stands high, even after the lapse of nearly two centuries ; but a large portion of the work may be truly described as a *Treatise on Jurisprudence generally*, illustrated by reference to the law of Scotland and other systems. It has been compared, and not unreasonably, by one of his editors to “a *Treatise of Universal Grammar*, where the author, keeping in view chiefly one language, and drawing most of his illustrations from it, enables the student not only more thoroughly to understand all the rules and principles upon which the grammar of this language depends, but also to apply this knowledge, with advantage and facility, to every other language to which he may turn his attention.” He himself claims that “a great part of what is here offered is common to most civil nations, and is not like to be displeasing to the judicious and sober anywhere, who doat not so much upon their own customs as to think that none else are worthy of their notice.” This comprehensive survey of legal relations common to all systems, the constant search after principle, the philosophical analysis, and the thorough technical knowledge, have given to a large part of his treatise a vitality and

width of application unexampled, we think, among works of the same class. To this day "Stair" is constantly quoted in the every-day work of the Scotch Courts ; and we have been assured by an eminent politician and lawyer that in his chapter on Reprisals was found the strongest authority for the position taken up by Great Britain in the affair of the "Trent." Mr. Mackay seems to us to institute not a flattering or even a reasonable comparison when he compares Lord Stair's Institutions with the practical labours of Coke, or the easy commentaries of Blackstone. They are all law books certainly ; but they have no other point of resemblance. Stair's comprehensive and philosophic treatise differs in its conception from the former, and stands altogether on a higher level than the latter. "I did write," he says, with a not ungraceful consciousness of desert, "the Institutions of the Law of Scotland, and did derive it from that common law that rules the world, and compared it with the laws civil and canon, and with the customs of the neighbouring nations, which hath been so acceptable that few considerable families in the nation wanted the same, and I have seen them avending both in England and Holland."

Inferior to his father in legal acquirement, Sir John Dalrymple was, in many respects, a more remarkable man. Macaulay estimates him as one of the first men of his time. His knowledge was great, and in him it was not the knowledge of a pedant, but of a thorough man of the world. As a statesman he was profound and far-seeing ; as a debater he had no equal. His letters show a love of reality, an impatience of pretence, an insight into character, a contempt for national prejudices, rare among Scotchmen of any time, hardly known among Scotchmen in his day. His character was altogether a stronger one

than his father's. Quite as unscrupulous, even more impenetrable, he was yet simpler and bolder. Hence, while hated with especial hatred by his rivals in the Parliament House,¹ he does not seem to have incurred the general unpopularity of his father. Nor is this surprising. The never-failing caution of the President; his astute devices, on occasions of difficulty, to save his reputation—such as the verbal qualification with which he took the Declaration; his intense respectability; his profuse piety; his forgiveness of enemies, almost Pecksniffian;² and his general success in life: were more calculated to arouse animosity than the franker tergiversations and bolder courses of the son, who, if he did some wrong, at least never made profession of exceeding virtue. "He was," says De Foe, "justly reputed the greatest man of counsel in the kingdom of Scotland;" and we are told by the same authority that "he died to the general grief of the whole island, being universally lamented." This grief was not without good cause. Those who hated Sir John Dalrymple most hated him because of services which constitute an enduring title to the gratitude of his countrymen, and which must have been widely appreciated even in his lifetime. For some years after the Revolution Scotland was exposed to a danger, the character and extent of which has hardly been appreciated by historians. A band of politicians, powerful from social position, strong in persistency of purpose, were bent upon establishing a narrow oligarchy. They sought to deprive the Crown of all

¹ Thus Lockhart: "The Master (of Stair) is among the worst men in this age; and what has been said of him may serve for a character of his two brothers, yea, the whole name; only with this difference, that tho' they were all equally willing, yet not equally capable of doing so much evil as his Lordship."

² "Most men thought this equality of spirit a mere hypocrisy in him," says Sir George Mackenzie.

authority ; they were prepared to reduce the people to serfdom ; the country was to be delivered over to a poor, greedy, unprincipled aristocracy. Had they prevailed, the future of Scotland would have been little better than the long misery of Ireland from the Revolution to the Union. Religious hatreds might not have flamed so high ; but in Scotland, not less than in Ireland, the domination of a small privileged class would have brought with it poverty, backwardness, and national degradation. To frustrate these pernicious designs was the leading purpose of the Secretary's public life. The danger by no means passed away with the breaking-up of the notorious "Club." The country was not safe ; Dalrymple's triumph was not secured, until the Treaty of Union was signed. To the very last these "patriots" struggled to curtail the royal power,¹ trusting that the reversion would come to them. Seeing early that they could not hope to defeat the Union altogether, they sought thus indirectly to make it ineffectual for good ; and doubtless the provisions which they sought to introduce would have had the effect they desired. Stair clearly apprehended the scope of these designs, and devoted himself to frustrate them. His success was complete, and happy for his country. On the union of Scotland with a constitution which had been the nurse of freedom, with the deeply-rooted public spirit, and, above all, with the increasing prosperity of England, that danger finally passed away.

Such were the lives, and such the services, of these

¹ An attempt, in the debates on the articles of Union, to take away the royal prerogative of mercy was, of course, opposed by Dalrymple, which brought on him the taunt from Lockhart that his defence of this prerogative was very natural, since but for its exercise he would have been hanged long ago ! Rather too hard hitting for our degenerate days.

remarkable men. That their lives were marred by shortcomings, by errors, even by crimes, we have not attempted to disguise. That their services were such as have rarely been rendered by a father and son to their country, it would, we think, be idle to deny. In character both rose above the low standard of political morality which prevailed in their time. Throughout all their changes they were faithful to the cause which for the time they served; and they appear to have been ever animated by a sincere desire for the welfare of their country. In intellect, culture, and sagacity they were superior to all their contemporaries. To their counsels and exertions Scotland mainly owes the easy accession of William to her throne, the settlement of her ecclesiastical difficulties, and (to the son) the Union. Few nations have owed more to two statesmen: yet much as they accomplished, much of necessity remained to be done. Materials for religious discord were still rife. The Highlands were left, unruly and discontented, to be the source of future trouble and danger. The commercial prosperity—the expectation of which was, on the Scotch side, the real inducing cause of the Union—did not come speedily. What did come, and at once, was increase of taxation, severities of revenue officers, alterations of ancient laws, enforcement of new prerogatives. These grievances—some of them not imaginary—fell upon the fertile soil of national animosity. The Union was hated by the bulk of the Scottish aristocracy, because under the Government of Great Britain their importance could not fail to be diminished, their selfish views frustrated; it was hated by the bulk of the Scottish people with a hatred which had its origin in a nobler source—the feelings and traditions bequeathed by their long and cruel struggle for independence. But the work of healing was only

a question of time. The foundations of well-being and mutual good-will had been laid strong and deep ; and, happily for Scotland, there were not wanting men, both among her nobles and her lawyers, worthy and able to carry on the policy, and complete the purposes, of William and his wise advisers.

MOTLEY'S UNITED NETHERLANDS.¹

“**I**N the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book? or goes to an American play? or looks at an American picture or statue?” So wrote Sydney Smith about forty years ago. And, allowing for the peculiar style of the accomplished Churchman, such questions were at that time natural enough. But time, among the other wonders which it works, has done much to wipe out this reproach. Art, indeed, despite the Greek Slave, cannot be said to have found a home on the other side of the Atlantic. American plays may exist, but Englishmen are unaware of them; and American poetry does not rise above the graceful mediocrity of Longfellow. To one important branch of literature, however, Americans have in our day addressed themselves with a large measure of success. They have written history, and written it well. Mr. Prescott’s picturesque narratives are read, we should think, in all the four quarters of the globe; and Mr. Motley may, without presumption, anticipate an equal popularity.

¹ “History of the United Netherlands, from the death of William the Silent to the Synod of Dort; with a full view of the English-Dutch Struggle against Spain, and of the Origin and Destruction of the Spanish Armada.” By John Lothrop Motley, D.C.L., etc. Vols. I. and II. London: 1860.—[Reprinted from the “North British Review,” No. 68. May 1861.]

"The Rise of the Dutch Republic," published some four years ago, won its way, not perhaps rapidly, but very surely. The subject was well chosen, and, on the whole, worthily handled. Hence the "History of the United Netherlands" was anxiously looked for. It has fulfilled, and more than fulfilled, the most favourable expectations. Though called by another name, the present work is a direct continuation of the former. The "Rise of the Dutch Republic" closed with the death of William the Silent in 1584; the "History of the United Netherlands" takes up the tale at the date of that calamity, and carries it on till after the destruction of the Armada.

The narration of that destruction is a theme of which Englishmen can never grow weary. Yet, on the whole, these volumes are not so rich in scenes of striking and varied interest as were their predecessors. There is nothing here to compare, in wild romance, with the famous submarine expeditions of Philipsland and Zierickzee; there are no horrors like the horrors of the "Spanish Fury," or the sack of Haarlem; nor are our hearts stirred by any such picture of noble endurance, rewarded by happy triumph, as is presented in the agony and relief of Leyden. On the other hand, the drama has broadened and deepened. We are no longer concerned with the rebellion of a province. The revolt of the "Beggars of the Sea" has expanded into the long strife of which the Reformation was the real beginning, and which was to end only with the peace of Westphalia. Mr. Motley's two volumes comprise the history of not more than six years. But in that brief period came the crisis of the most momentous struggle the world has ever seen—Despotism and Popery striving against Freedom and Toleration for the possession of the civilised world. It should always be remembered that this great war

was a war for liberty of thought. There never was a moment in its early history in which the Dutch would not have returned to their allegiance had they been promised liberty of conscience ; there never was a moment in which Philip dreamed of yielding to such a demand. It is not too much to say that the destinies of our race for many ages depended on the issue of this contest. Fortunately for the better part, the Emperor, busy with the advancing power of the Turks, stood aloof ; the German Lutherans, filled with an unworthy jealousy of Netherlandic Calvinism, refused to succour ; France, torn with internal dissensions, was powerless, at least for good : so that Holland and England stood alone against the gigantic empire of Spain. The Hollanders were held of small account. Despite their lengthened resistance, they were regarded as a band of reckless sailors, daring in piratical expeditions, but utterly incapable of offering any lasting opposition to the organised power of Philip. The English, indeed, had, some two centuries before, taken their place among the nations in a true imperial style. Since then, however, cooped up within the limits of their own island, they had quarrelled plentifully among themselves, but had taken no share in Continental affairs. The memories of Cressy and of Agincourt were forgotten, and the victors in those fights were regarded as faithless and turbulent islanders. The following sketches give some curious traits, especially as to the tendencies of our ancestors in their convivial moments :—

“The English,” says an Antwerp historian, “are a very clever, handsome, and well-made people ; but, like all islanders, by nature weak and tender. . . . As a people, they are stout-hearted, vehement, eager, cruel in war, zealous in attack, little fearing death ; not revengeful, but fickle, presumptuous, rash, boastful, deceitful, very suspicious,

especially of strangers, whom they despise. They are full of courteous and hypocritical gestures and words, which they consider to imply good manners, civility, and wisdom. They are well spoken, and very hospitable. They feed well—eating much meat, which, owing to the rainy climate, and the ranker character of the grass, is not so firm and succulent as the meat of France and the Netherlands. The people are not so laborious as the French and Hollanders, preferring to lead an indolent life, like the Spaniards. They dress very elegantly. Their costume is light and costly, but they are very changeable and capricious—altering their fashions every year, both the men and the women.”

“They excel in dancing and music,” says a German tourist, “for they are active and lively, although they are of a thicker build than the Germans. They are good sailors, and better pirates, cunning, treacherous, thievish. Three hundred and upwards are hanged annually in London. The English are more polite in eating than the French, devouring less bread, but more meat, which they roast in perfection. They are powerful in the field, successful against their enemies, impatient of anything like slavery, vastly fond of great ear-filling noises, such as cannon-firing, drum-beating, and bell-ringing; so that it is very common for a number of them, when they have got a cup too much in their heads, to go up to some belfry, and ring the bells for an hour together for the sake of amusement.”—Vol. i. pp. 307-9.

On the other hand, the Spaniards were esteemed throughout the world as a race born to command. Awe, hatred, and admiration were the mingled feelings excited even among Englishmen by Spanish prowess and Spanish policy. Long years of successful warfare, daring enterprises in unknown lands, had conferred on Philip II. an extent of empire greater than what was ever possessed by Napoleon I. In 1584, Philip ruled—in Europe—Spain, Portugal, Celtic Flanders, the Milanese, and the Two Sicilies. The other States of Italy were obedient to his lightest wish. In Asia he possessed the Philippines and the valuable settle-

ments which had been founded by the energy of the first Portuguese discoverers. America was all his own. But his mightiest power was in his statesmen and in his warriors. The Great Captain had reared up a soldiery in the Italian wars before whom the impetuosity of France, and the steadiness of the Swiss legions, had been alike found wanting; Cortes and Pizarro, in the farthest west, had trained their followers to a pitch of courage and a fertility of resource which had often served to confound all the strange devices of a barbarian foe. The Spaniards of that day were the kings of the world. They had acquired the subtlety and serene wisdom of Italian statesmen; they possessed as their birthright a force of character and a knightly honour to which the Italian was a stranger. Aspiring politicians, stern and haughty rulers, they might be; yet formed of nobler clay than the unrelenting voluptuaries of Italy. They were dark, resolute, and dangerous men, reminding us of the blood-hounds frequently associated with them in the pictures of Velasquez. That such men, wielding such a power, should have been baffled by a band of wild, undisciplined sailors, inhabiting an inhospitable sand-bank, must be ascribed mainly to the bigotry and obstinacy of their king, but perhaps also to that inward consciousness of wrong which has often smitten the strongest with feebleness, and turned to foolishness the counsels of the wise.

Alexander Farnese, Duke of Parma, may be taken as the ideal Spaniard of his day. He is unquestionably the hero of these two volumes, as William the Silent was of the former. Mr. Motley draws character at once elaborately and vividly, and has in this instance done his very best:—

“Farnese was now thirty-seven years of age—with the experience of a sexagenarian. No longer the impetuous,

arbitrary, hot-headed youth, whose intelligence and courage hardly atoned for his insolent manner and stormy career, he had become pensive, modest, almost gentle. His genius was rapid in conception, patient in combination, fertile in expedients, adamant in the endurance of suffering; for never did a heroic general and a noble army of veterans manifest more military virtue in the support of an infamous cause than did Parma and his handful of Italians and Spaniards. That which they considered to be their duty they performed. The work before them they did with all their might. . . . Alexander rose with the difficulty and responsibility of his situation. His vivid, almost poetic intellect, formed his schemes with perfect distinctness. Every episode in his great, and, as he himself called it, his 'heroic enterprise,' was traced out beforehand with the tranquil vision of creative genius; and he was prepared to convert his conceptions into reality, with the aid of an iron nature, which never knew fatigue or fear. . . . Untiring, uncomplaining, thoughtful of others, prodigal of himself, generous, modest, brave; with so much intellect and so much devotion to what he considered his duty, he deserved to be a patriot, and a champion of the right, rather than an instrument of despotism.

"And thus he paused for a moment—with much work already accomplished, but his hardest life-task before him; still in the noon of manhood, a fine martial figure, standing, spear in hand, full in the sunlight, though all the scene around him was wrapped in gloom—a noble, commanding shape, entitled to the admiration which the energetic display of great powers, however unscrupulous, must always command. A dark meridional physiognomy; a quick, alert, imposing head; jet black, close-clipped hair; a bold eagle's face, with full, bright, restless eye; a man rarely reposing, always ready, never alarmed; living in the saddle, with harness on his back;—such was the Prince of Parma; matured and mellowed, but still unharmed by time."—Vol. i. pp. 135-8.

The cause which Parma maintained was hateful; the stage on which he acted was not extensive. Yet,

even allowing for these things, it is a striking instance of the caprice of Fame, that his reputation should have fallen so far short of his deserts. No one who compares his achievements with his resources can resist the conviction that he is entitled to be ranked among the very greatest commanders. The siege of Antwerp alone is sufficient to establish his renown. In all the highest characteristics of military genius he seems not unworthy to be named even with Hannibal or with Cæsar. Perhaps, however, his purest title to fame is to be found in this, that the war, as conducted by him, put off the savage aspect which it had worn before. The storm of Neutz, indeed, was no very gentle affair; but it should be remembered that the garrison had provoked their fate by a flagrant violation of the laws of war, to the great personal danger of Farnese himself, and that, even then, he did his utmost to restrain the anger of his troops. His humanity and courtesy, his refined intellect and subtle policy, combine to impress the imagination far more powerfully than even the awe and terror which invest with a lurid splendour the soldierlike figure of Alva.

Pitted against such an antagonist, and deprived of their great leader by the crime of July, the Hollanders were in evil case. Speaking roughly, all Celtic Flanders,—Hainault, Arthois, Douay, with the cities Arras, Valenciennes, Lille, Tournay, had fallen into the power of Spain, by the treason, or “reconciliation,” of the preceding year. The rebels held what is now known as the kingdom of Holland. Between them lay the scene of strife—the rich territories of East Flanders and Brabant—the possession of which would belong to him who could hold the half-dozen cities which lie clustered round the Scheldt and its tributaries. At the date of William’s murder,

these cities were occupied by the Republicans. He had hardly been dead two months when Farnese was master of Ghent. Dendermonde had capitulated even sooner. Brussels fell in March of the following year, and Mechlin could hold out no longer than mid-summer. Antwerp alone remained. On the fate of this town depended, in the judgment of Parma, the fate of all Christendom.

Dismayed, yet not despairing, the Hollanders looked around for help. They first sought it where they had been taught to seek it by their departed leader. The Prince of Orange had placed more reliance on the assistance of France than on the assistance of England. His reasons for this were many and weighty. France was, at that time, much the stronger power. The French Huguenots sympathised cordially with the Calvinists and Anabaptists of the Low Countries; the English Government disliked Calvinists and Anabaptists about as heartily as it disliked Papists. The next heir to the French Crown was the chosen leader of the Protestant party; the hopes of the Papists all over the world were centred on the captive who, on the death of Elizabeth, would pass from a prison to the throne of England. Above all, Elizabeth had uniformly repelled the overtures of the Provinces; Catherine de Medicis had as uniformly welcomed them. But affairs in France had greatly changed since such considerations had determined the policy of Orange. The Duke of Anjou was dead; Henry of Navarre was away at Pau, with nothing to do but to make love to his wife's maids of honour; Henry III. was every day sinking deeper in degradation; Henry of Guise was every day rising higher in renown, and the power of the League had already overshadowed the throne. Even before the death of Orange the increasing influence of the Catholic party in France

had caused some modification of his views. But now the ascendancy of the Papists was beyond a doubt : the king was in the hands, and at the disposal, of the Guises. When the ambassadors from Holland arrived in France, they found that the Queen-mother was playing for her own claims on Portugal, that Henry of Guise was playing for Philip and for himself, that Henry of Navarre held no cards, and that Henry of Valois could not play the cards he held. After much solemn trifling, when much time, altogether priceless, had been lost, the eyes of the ambassadors were opened at last. On the 18th of July 1585 the Edict of Nemours was published, banishing all Huguenots from the kingdom on pain of death. The game was up ; and every man in Holland became aware that their last hope was England.

We will not follow Mr. Motley in detail through the negotiations which ensued. They were especially discreditable to English sense and English candour ; in truth, it is hardly possible to read of them, even at this distance of time, without a feeling of shame. Hesitation and delay seemed our only policy. Our statesmen, or rather our queen, trifled with opportunity, and let occasion die, in a manner which would have been laughable had it not led to results so disastrous. At last the genius of Parma achieved its deserved triumph. Antwerp capitulated. One great point was lost ; yet much remained to fight for. Terror inspired a temporary vigour into English tactics. An inadequate force was despatched to Holland, and the Earl of Leicester was sent in command. A more unhappy selection could not have been made.

The public men of that epoch seem to derive a sort of reflected grandeur from the strangeness of the events which they witnessed, and from the magnitude

of the interests in which they were involved. They appear somehow men of loftier stature than the men of other times. Nor, perhaps, is this appearance only. We can well believe that their characters took an impress from what they saw and heard around them. Stimulants of no common potency were applied to their natures. They had seen the Old World changing its religion—they had been amazed by the discovery of the New—legends of wild adventures in lands far distant rung each day in their ears—they had marked the greatest empire of the world rise and overshadow the earth with its pride; and they were now matched against that empire in a deadly struggle, of which the issue would determine the destinies of the whole human race. Such things could not fail to strengthen, even if they did not elevate. “*Dans un grand siècle,*” says Cousin, “*tout est grand.*” Hence these men displayed, beyond all other traits, an abounding and irrepressible vigour. Their very excesses of conviviality command a certain respect. It is not every set of Bacchanalians who, like Brederode and his compeers, could lay deep the foundations of rebellion at a riotous supper party, and in their cups adopt the name by which the sailors of Zeeland, through long years of peril, were proud to be called. And now, when their wild youth was spent, the men who finally won freedom for the Netherlands come before us, intensified by time, sobered by danger, yet undaunted—one of the noblest groups in the gallery of the heroes of the world: sailors, like Drake and Nassau; soldiers, like La Noue, Norris, and Sidney; partisans, like Schenk and Hohenlo; statesmen, like Buys, Barneveld, and Walsingham.

Into the counsels of these men came Leicester, at once incapable and unworthy. In the field and in the cabinet he was a child in the hands of Farnese.

Every step he took in the Netherlands was a blunder, or worse. He began by feasting at The Hague, he ended by an attempt to establish his own power in the scene of his revels, and to destroy the constitutional government of the Provinces. His first step was eminently injudicious. Elizabeth had expressly forbidden one thing—that he should accept the supreme authority in Holland. The moment he got there, this obedient subject proceeded to take all the authority he could get, and to intrigue for more. He got all he wanted; and having thus grievously offended his sovereign, he made no attempt to deprecate her certain anger. When the storm burst, he poured forth whimpering appeals, imploring permission to return, were it only to “rub her horse’s heels.” The Queen was appeased; but the envoy had been publicly degraded, and the confidence of the States was not easily restored. Leicester took no pains to regain it. He would brook no restraint from the Hollanders, determined, as he wrote to Davison, that he would “have no other alliance but with gentle blood.” He weakened the cause of the patriots by persecuting all the Papists on whom he could lay his hands. Indeed, this good man’s hatred of Popery was most exemplary. A loose, easy-going fellow like William the Silent, denounced all oppression, and sheltered within his young republic Papists, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Anabaptists alike. But a man of rigid principle, and edifying life and conversation, like the husband of Amy Robsart, could not act thus. He was no Gallio; and under his administration, therefore, Papists were oppressed, plundered, and banished. He quarrelled with every English diplomatist, and with every English soldier, save one who wisely truckled to him. His hatreds were conceived in a moment, and endured for a lifetime. At last, when

his arrogance, his revengefulness, his deceit, had brought distrust and dislike to a height, he suddenly crossed to England, leaving the patriots without a leader for seven months; and yet refusing to resign his office that it might be filled by another. Hating every competent officer under him, he confided the city of Deventer, a large, prosperous, commercial, and manufacturing capital, to a pack of wild Irish kernes, headed by Sir William Stanley. For the only time in the annals of England, deliberate treason in the field stained the honour of the English arms. Stanley betrayed Deventer to the Spaniards. The Hollanders went mad with grief and rage. The services of the English were forgotten; the sufferings of the starving English soldiers were unrelieved; their lives were hardly secure. In the midst of the turmoil Leicester returned, but only to work more evil. He returned to be denounced by Barneveld in the States—to display again his incapacity as a general—to form abortive conspiracies in Leyden and Amsterdam—in a word, to do his utmost to destroy the commonwealth of the Netherlands in the very crisis of the struggle—to make himself perfectly odious to the nation whom he came to govern; at last to be recalled by his blindly-indulgent Queen, and to receive a welcome which she seldom vouchsafed to better men and more faithful servants.

Throughout Mr. Motley's pages, the said Queen—Mr. Kingsley's Titaness, "Alruna-Maiden," and what not—generally appears in very untitanic proportions, and often indulges in proceedings quite unmaidenly. Her true policy was shown to her very early in the day by Vavasour: "If your Majesty desireth a convenient peace," said the diplomatist, "to take the field is the readiest way to obtain it; for, as yet, the King of Spain hath no reason to fear you. He is daily

expecting that your own slackness may give your Majesty an overthrow. Moreover, the Spaniards are soldiers, and are not to be moved by shadows." Walsingham never ceased to urge the same views. He longed for peace; yet he knew that peace could only be reached through "a good sharp war." But to pursue such a policy as this required consistency and generosity, and Elizabeth was incapable of either. When she first heard of the authority confided by the States to Leicester, jealousy of her favourite, and especially of her favourite's wife, was the ruling passion. She stormed, and raged, and swore, till poor Lord Burleigh took to his bed, and even Walsingham was filled with dismay. It is curious to see what her fury was all about, and how it was appeased. Send her Majesty "a present—a love-gift," wrote all the courtiers to Leicester. "Lay out two or three hundred crowns in some rare thing for a token to her Majesty," was the advice of Sir Christopher Hatton. Leicester does not seem to have adopted the plan of the dancing Chancellor, but to have preferred the more economical expedient of expressing his desire to come home and rub the heels of her Majesty's horse. This, however, was enough. Burleigh forthwith reports that "her princely heart is touched with a favourable interpretation of your actions, affirming them to be only offensive to her in that she was not made privy to them, not now misliking that you had the authority." But the mischief was done. The plain Hollanders were unable to comprehend these lover-like quarrels and reconciliations on questions of state-policy. The Queen had shaken the authority of the Earl, had destroyed the confidence of the States in her own sincerity; and, no sooner had she thoroughly accomplished this, than she veered right round. She was a perfect Dame Quickly in her politics. When Leicester's position had been

weakened by her idle jealousies, when he himself had forfeited all respect from his conspicuous incapacity, and alienated all affection by his arrogance, she would listen to no word in his dispraise. She stood by him, now that he was wrong, as heartily as she had cursed at him when he was right. She must still—at the age of 53—write to him as her “Sweet Robin,” in a style unseemly from any woman to any man, doubly so from a queen to a subject. She scolded the States most virulently, because they estimated him at his true value. She treated her ablest servants with contumely, if they ventured to thwart, in any particular, the imperious favourite. Sir John Norris was the object of Leicester’s especial hatred; therefore, despite his brilliant exploits in the field, he was forbidden her Majesty’s presence. Buckhurst, afterwards Lord Dorset, who had discharged the duties of plenipotentiary in the Netherlands, with an honesty and ability beyond praise, was ignominiously imprisoned in his own house till the death of Leicester. Wilkes, whose merits were only second to those of Buckhurst, who had lavished his own money to feed starving English soldiers, had been called a “villain and a devil” by Leicester, and was therefore thrown into the Fleet. And this is the Queen who, according to Mr. Kingsley, kept the “balance even between her courtiers as skillfully, gently, justly, as woman ever did, or mortal man either!”¹

Perplexed by such caprice, the Hollanders had ever before their eyes a fact about which there could be no mistake—the fact that the English army was utterly neglected, unpaid, and unclothed. Nothing could

¹ Every one remembers her treatment of Davison, who appears, in these volumes, to have served her as faithfully in the Netherlands as he did afterwards at Fotheringay, and to have been requited much in the same fashion.

cure the Queen of her miserable parsimony. "The brightest jewel in her crown," Sir Philip Sidney, remonstrated, and gained only ill-will for his pains. "She was very apt," says Walsingham, "upon every light occasion, to find fault with him;" as, indeed, she was with every one who would not approach her with debasing adulation—who would not pray for permission to "rub her horse's heels." On this one point, even Leicester ventured to speak, but he spoke in vain.

"The English soldiers who had fought so well in every Flemish battle-field of freedom, had become—such as were left of them—mere famishing, half-naked vagabonds and marauders. Brave soldiers had been changed by their sovereign into brigands, and now the universal odium which suddenly attached itself to the English name, converted them into outcasts. Forlorn and crippled creatures swarmed about the provinces, but were forbidden to come through the towns, and so wandered about, robbing hen-roosts and pilaging the peasantry. Many deserted to the enemy. Many begged their way to England, and even to the very gates of the palace, and exhibited their wounds and their misery before the eyes of that good Queen Bess, who claimed to be the mother of her subjects, and begged for bread in vain." —Vol. ii. p. 183.

Especially they thronged Greenwich Palace—starving, wounded, and in rags, and were driven from the gates of the "Alruna Maiden," and threatened with the stocks as vagabonds! Such is the lamentable and disgraceful truth, told by no enemies of the English Queen, but by her own generals and confidential counsellors. The soldiers, perhaps, found consolation in the reflection that she treated her sailors exactly in the same way.

Nor was this the worst. A mystery, which even the researches of Mr. Motley have hardly made clear, hangs over Elizabeth's secret negotiations with Spain.

Yet we know enough to throw great doubt on her good faith towards Holland. Her changefulness—coming very near to duplicity—is beyond question. We will give but one instance. On the 1st of April 1586, Elizabeth wrote to Sir Thomas Heneage, then in the Netherlands, stating that she would do nothing that might concern the States “without their own knowledge and good-liking.” On the 21st of April, Walsingham instructs Leicester to acquaint the Council of State, that “overtures of peace are being daily made to her Majesty, but that she meaneth not to proceed therein without their good-liking and privity,” etc. These statements were unquestionably in accordance with the spirit, if not with the letter, of the treaty of the preceding August. For either Holland or England to have contracted a separate peace with Spain, after that treaty, would, in the words of Mr. Motley, have been “disingenuous, if not positively dishonourable.” Yet on the 26th of April, five days after Walsingham’s despatch to Leicester, we find the Queen furious at this communication having been made. “Think you,” she writes to Sir Thomas Heneage, in a letter filled with much abuse, “think you I will be bound by your speech to make no peace for mine own matters without their consent? It is enough that I injure not their country nor themselves in making peace for them without their consent.” Poor Sir Thomas might well take to his bed, and write in great despair, “I fear that the world will judge what Champagny wrote in one of his letters out of England (which I have lately seen) to be over true. His words be these, ‘Et de vray, c’est le plus fascheux et le plus incertain négociier de ceste court, qui je pense soit au monde.’” Mr. Motley does not go beyond this. He accuses the Queen of slackness, of timidity, even of a certain degree of insincerity; but

he acquits her of deliberate treachery. We wish we could concur in the gentler verdict. But a careful study of the evidence which he has himself adduced inspires us with uneasy suspicions. Elizabeth's order for the arrest of Hohenlo, the General of the States, hardly seems becoming a faithful ally. And a much darker story remains behind. There is no manner of doubt, that towards the close of his administration, Leicester formed the treacherous design of seizing some important Dutch cities, so as to enable the Queen to make good terms for herself with Spain, "if the worst came to the worst." That this treason was suggested from England does not appear, but it certainly was communicated to England. On the 27th of June 1586, the Earl wrote thus to the Queen :—

"This I will do, and I hope not to fail of it, to get into my hands three or four most principal places in North Holland, which will be such a strength and assurance for your Majesty, as you shall see you shall both rule these men and make war and peace as you list, always provided—whatsoever you hear, or is—part not with the Brill; and having these places in your hands, whatsoever should chance to these countries, your Majesty I will warrant sure enough to make what peace you will in an hour, and to have your debts and charges answered."

And again, on the 5th of November 1587, at the very time when the Queen was loudly protesting her good faith to the States, and denouncing all who refused credence, the following despatch was on its way to England :—

"I will not be idle to do all that in me shall lie to make this island of Walchern assured, whatsoever shall fall out; which, if it may be, your Majesty shall the less fear to make a good bargain for yourself when the worst shall come."

It must be confessed that, in the face of all this, Queen Elizabeth has need of a sturdy advocate. The

truth is, it is absurd to speak of her as the champion of Protestantism in any true or unselfish sense. The "proximus ardet" adage is the real key to her policy in the Low Countries. Had her own safety been assured, we are persuaded that she would have looked on with the most philosophical composure, while the fires of the Inquisition were blazing at Amsterdam or at Utrecht. This much is certain: that in the spring of 1586, the Hollanders were united as one man, ardent in their resistance to Spain, eager to welcome the English as their deliverers;—that by the end of 1587, between the "Alruna Maiden" and her "Sweet Robin," dissension had broken out in the Provinces themselves, distrust of English policy was universal, and the whole alliance was brought to the verge of ruin. The Queen and her favourite had played the game of Parma well. It was in no sort owing to them that, ere the close of 1588, the only two free States in Europe were not prostrate at the feet of Philip. Mr. Motley sums up the matter in language far too gentle, when he says:—

"English valour, English intelligence, English truthfulness, English generosity, were endearing England more and more to Holland. The statesmen of both countries were brought into closest union, and learned to appreciate and to respect each other, while they recognised that the fate of their respective commonwealths was indissolubly connected. But it was to the efforts of Walsingham, Drake, Raleigh, Wilkes, Buckhurst, Norris, Willoughby, Williams, Vere, Russell, and the brave men who fought under their banners or their counsels, on every battle-field, and in every beleaguered town in the Netherlands, and to the universal spirit and sagacity of the English nation, in this grand crisis of its fate, that these fortunate results were owing; not to the Earl of Leicester; nor—during the term of his administration—to Queen Elizabeth herself."—Vol. ii. p. 551.

Nor, when the final struggle came, does her Majesty

appear in a very striking light. She would not avert the blow by an adequate and timely succour of the Hollanders ; she was not even prepared to meet it when it fell upon her own land. Duplicity is always bad ; but when unsuccessful, over-reaching itself, so bent on deceiving that it overlooks the possibility of being deceived, and falls blindly and unsuspectingly into the snares spread openly before it, such duplicity becomes beyond measure contemptible. And such was the duplicity of Elizabeth. The Netherlanders were to be hoodwinked ; but it was forgotten that Farnese was ten times more subtle than the Netherlanders and the English put together. The records of diplomacy do not generally convey pleasing views of human nature. And perhaps in the whole history of diplomacy, nothing can be found more discreditable to all concerned than the English negotiation with Parma in the years 1587 and in the beginning of 1588. On the part of Parma they were conducted with apparent sincerity, in reality with the most profound perfidy. While amusing the English envoys he was urging on night and day the preparations for the invasion of their country. The strange thing is that he does not seem to have expected to be believed. It never occurred to him that even those stupid islanders could be so stupid as they actually were. Nor, indeed, would he have obtained credence for a moment, had not the English Queen, and every English statesman, save Walsingham, been smitten with an infatuation which had well-nigh proved fatal to their country. At the same time, we must not be too loud in our denunciations of Spanish treachery. Farnese was indeed perfidious—perfectly so ; but after the letters which have been quoted above, the less we say on this head, perhaps, the better.

At the very end of July 1588, one of the ambas-

sadors, an ingenious and learned gentleman of the name of Dale, wrote to Burleigh a very peaceful letter, containing the following passage :—" I have written two or three verses out of Virgil for the Queen to read, which I pray your Lordship to present unto her. God grant her to weigh them. If your Lordship will read the whole discourse of Virgil, in that place, it will make your heart melt." When this letter reached England, Queen Elizabeth and her ministers had something else to do than to melt over the pages of Virgil. Yet, strange to say, their delusion continued till the Armada was actually exchanging broadsides with the English fleet. Lord Burleigh indeed does not cut a distinguished figure in Mr. Motley's pages. He is always doubting, shaking his head, and praying for a Dædalus "to direct us out of the maze;" but, even at the most critical moment, he never gets beyond these very inefficacious proceedings. Dr. Nares, his venerable and partial biographer, were he alive now, would be much scandalised at the following expressions from the Admiral of England :—"Since England was England," writes Lord Howard to Walsingham, "there never was such a stratagem and mask to deceive her as this treaty of peace. I pray God that we do not curse for this, a long grey beard with a white head witless, that will make all the world think us heartless." You know whom I mean." And, indeed, it required no witch to guess at the allusion to the Lord Treasurer. Nothing produced any effect. Hesitation and delay prevailed till the last. The very day the Armada sighted the Lizard, and the light of ten thousand beacon fires was flaming over England, the Lord Admiral received orders to dismantle four of his largest ships. The same miserable parsimony sent the fleet to sea short both of ammunition and provisions. After the fight

off Gravelines, half the fleet had to return for want of food ; and the rest, in the words of the Admiral, " put on a brag countenance and gave chase, as though we had wanted nothing, though our powder and shot was well-nigh spent." To chase a formidable enemy up and down the Northern Sea, without powder, without shot, and with nothing to eat or drink, could hardly be considered an agreeable pastime even by English sailors. As Mr. Motley remarks, " Had the Spaniards, instead of being panic-struck, but turned on their pursuers, what might have been the result of a conflict with starving and unarmed men ?"

Matters were not much better on shore. On the 7th of August—the day the Armada was at Calais, the day a landing would have been effected had Farnese been able to break through the Dutch fleet—only some 4000 troops lay between London and the sea. And, by way of mending matters, the command of these troops was intrusted to " Sweet Robin," the man whose incompetency had lost the battle of Zutphen, and had sacrificed the garrison of Sluys. The celebrated scene of Elizabeth at Tilbury was not enacted till nine days after the Armada had fled northward. At no time did the army quartered there exceed 17,000 men. Well might brave Roger Williams declare, that nothing but a series of miracles had saved England from perdition.

One painful topic remains. We have seen already how the soldiers who bled for England in the Netherlands were rewarded by the English Queen. The sailors, who had saved England in the English seas, met with a like requital. The same unworthy meanness led to the same barbarity. August—the month of the great deliverance—had not expired, when the men by whom that deliverance had been wrought, unpaid and unfed, were dying in hundreds from want and

neglect. They rotted away in their ships, or fell dead, uncared for, in the streets of the ports. Hospitals there were none; there were not even doctors on shipboard.

"'Tis a most pitiful sight," writes the noble Lord Howard, "to see here, at Margate, how the men, having no place where they can be received, die in the streets. I am driven of force myself to come on land to see them bestowed in some lodgings; and the best I can get is barns, and such outhouses; and the relief is small that I can provide for them here. It would grieve any man's heart to see men that have served so valiantly die so miserably."

The enormous folly of this at a time when the Armada might have any day returned, is bad enough. But the folly is forgotten in the cruelty and ingratitude. Such was the administration of Queen Elizabeth.

On the evening of the 6th of August 1588, the roads of Calais presented a spectacle which, both in its outward pomp, and in the magnitude of the interests at stake, can hardly be paralleled in the history of the world. A hundred and fifty small sloops and frigates bearing the flag of England lay face to face—barely out of gunshot—with about the same number of Spanish ships, the largest and most heavily armed which could be produced by naval architecture of the time. The opposing fleets rode at anchor, rising and falling on the long, slow swell of the calm sea. On the English side, anxiety and great alarm, yet a firm resolve to do all that men could do; not without some hope of a happy issue inspired by recent success. Among the Spaniards, a proud and foolish confidence; their banners flaunted gaily in the silvery moonlight; salvoes of artillery were poured forth in celebration of their anticipated triumph; and strains of exulting music filled the midnight air. The dawn of Sunday,

the seventh, smiled good fortune on the invaders. The weather was bright, the sea was smooth ; the elements would no longer fight for the heretic islanders. Their hearts swelled high within them : the storm of London should be for a greater terror to the nations than had been even " the fury " at Antwerp. As the day wore on, disquietude succeeded to expectation ; as night drew near, disquietude gave place to doubt, fear, and terrible suspicion. Through long hours the Duke of Medina Sidonia paced the deck of the " Saint Martin," a prey to the bitterest emotions, straining his eyes towards the eastern horizon, with the words, " Where is Farnese ? " ever on his lips. Farnese came not ; and with that day's sunset the hopes of the Spaniards sunk, the danger of England passed away. On this second night of anchorage no moon looked down ; thick clouds overspread the sky ; the moaning of an approaching tempest was heard far out on the western sea ; and the gloom was fearfully illumined by the blaze of English fire-ships. The Spaniards were smitten with nameless terrors ; confusion and turmoil disturbed the darkness ; and returning dawn showed many ships disabled and aground, the body of the fleet driving, panic-struck, towards the Flemish coast. The fight off Gravelines was the fitting sequel to the night at Calais. All was over. The Armada fled away into northern storms, to be dashed to pieces against the rocks of Norway and the Faroes.

The crisis of the struggle was on Sunday, the seventh. On the events of that day the whole affair depended. Farnese did not appear ; and the expedition was from that time necessarily a failure. For it cannot be too often repeated that the Armada was never intended to conquer England by itself. The theory of the invasion all along was that a junction should be accomplished with Farnese, who was then to take upon

himself the command of the expedition. To the invading force the Armada could only contribute some six thousand troops; the rest was to be made up of those stern warriors who had followed Alva and Parma to victory on a hundred fields. Medina Sidonia had no orders to attempt a landing alone, and never contemplated doing so. His sole object was to effect a junction with Farnese, and to protect the passage of the open boats which were to convey the veterans of the Netherlands to the shores of England. The answer to the question of Sidonia, "Where is Farnese?" is also the answer to the question, "How was England saved?"

This answer has not been frankly given by English historians. Farnese was kept a close prisoner by the Dutch fleet; and the importance of this service has never been sufficiently recognised. The sea, on that Sunday, was at rest; and had Farnese been able to put out with his flotilla, very different might have been the results. A hand-to-hand fight between the English and Spanish fleets would have been inevitable. The harassing mode of attack which the former had hitherto practised, would have been no longer of any avail. They must have come to close quarters. And when we remember that this would have been before the panic of the night of the seventh, when the Spanish were yet confident, and buoyed up with well-grounded hope, and that it would have been in weather so serene that seamanship could hardly have come into play, it is impossible to resist a fear that Providence, in the words of Napoleon, "would have been on the side of the strongest battalions." That such an engagement never took place was owing to the vigilance of the Dutch. Upwards of a hundred vessels, of every description, and of all sizes, under Nassau and Van der Does, swarmed in all the estuaries

on the Flemish coast, blockading every egress to the ocean from Dunkirk or from Sluys. The "Beggars of the Sea" had come into the game at last. Now was their chance to requite Philip for the desolation he had wrought upon their country—for the sufferings of Leyden, for the treacherous sack of Haarlem. They could now take a leading part in frustrating the great design of his life, in giving the first blow to the overgrown fabric of his power. Now had come an opportunity rewarding them for years of sorrow, of suffering, and of peril, the history of which makes us stand amazed at the fortitude of the men who could endure to the end. They had waited for it long, and they used it well. Even at this distance of time our hearts beat in sympathy with those wild sailors, as, exulting in their long-deferred and often despaired-of triumph, they marked their cruel enemy cowering in his trenches, and dared him, with taunts and jeers, to come forth to meet them on the sea.

"As for the Prince of Parma," said Drake, "I take him to be as a bear robbed of her whelps." The Admiral was right. Farnese was transported with rage, and he had cause to be so. The miscarriage was no fault of his. He had all along told Philip that he could not possibly come out with his soldiers unless the sea were cleared. His boats, he had urged, were mere transports, only fit to float in calm weather; and that, as for fighting, four ships of war would destroy them all. The idea, that with these open boats he could put out in the face of the Dutch fleet, he had denounced as the wildest folly; and he had foretold the failure of the expedition if such a delusion were entertained. The delusion was entertained, and Farnese's prophecies came true. Philip insisted on regarding the rebellious Dutchmen as of no account: the "Beggars of the Sea" convinced him of his mis-

take. Farnese had made his arrangements with wonderful forethought and skill. So complete were his preparations, that he could have embarked all his men in a single day. He actually did embark a large portion of his troops, and kept them in the boats, "like sacks of corn," for two days. But the "Beggars" were always there, filling every outlet; and the soldiers would not face them. For the only time in his life, Farnese forgot generalship in his anger. He ordered a thousand musketeers to attack the Dutchmen. Their officers remonstrated. Alexander struck them dead with his own hand. The men reluctantly advanced to a hopeless contest, and not one returned alive. At last came the news of the flight of the Armada; and Farnese, of all men least to blame, yet most of all men bearing the reproach, disembarked his troops, and turned to new projects with the patient energy of genius.

The service which the Hollanders had rendered in preventing his putting to sea was incalculable. Had a man of his ability stood on the decks of the Armada, even without the soldiers who so devotedly loved him, affairs would have worn a very different aspect. This service has not, we think, been sufficiently acknowledged by English writers. The careless Hume, and the painstaking Lingard alike, pass it over in almost total silence. Mr. Motley brings it prominently forward, in no unfair spirit towards England, but simply from a love of justice. He puts the question in its true light when he claims for the Dutch sailors an equal share of honour with the English. And the sailors of the two countries must share all the honour between them. That England would, in any case, have been permanently conquered, Mr. Motley does not for a moment insinuate. But no candid man can doubt, that had a landing been effected, Leicester and

his four thousand men would not have stood before Parma for an hour. London would have been stormed, and misery altogether inconceivable would have been spread over England. That such horrors were averted, is to be ascribed, under Providence, to Philip's obstinate neglect of the advice of Farnese, and to the heroism of the Dutch and English sailors,—in no way whatever, as we read the story, to the measures of a Government deficient both in wisdom and in energy.

To whatsoever cause attributable, the deliverance had been wrought, and all the land was glad with the sound of pious thanksgiving. Spain was humbled in the dust, her maritime power was overthrown, another invasion of England could never be attempted. Holland, indeed, continued to be pressed by Parma for some eighteen months more; but, when Mr. Motley closes his second volume, in 1590, Holland also was secure. Changes had occurred in France which transferred thither the struggle between freedom and despotism, and left to the Netherlands a breathing space. The assassination of the Duke of Guise, and of the last Valois, brought prominently on the stage the greatest character of the time. Mr. Motley has laboured much in portraying Henry of Navarre: we can only quote some portions of a very brilliant delineation:—

“ We see, at once, a man of moderate stature, light, sinewy, and strong; a face browned with continual exposure; small, mirthful, yet commanding blue eyes, glittering from beneath an arching brow, and prominent cheekbones; a long hawk's nose, almost resting upon a salient chin, a pendent moustache, and a thick, brown, curly beard, prematurely grizzled; we see the mien of frank authority and magnificent good-humour, we hear the ready sallies of the shrewd Gascon mother-wit, we feel the electricity which flashes out of him, and sets all hearts around him on fire, when the trumpet sounds to battle. The headlong desperate charge, the snow-white plume waving where the fire is hottest, the large

capacity for enjoyment of the man, rioting without affectation in the *certaminis gaudia*, the insane gallop, after the combat, to lay its trophies at the feet of the Cynthia of the minute, and thus to forfeit its fruits ;—all are as familiar to us as if the seven distinct wars, the hundred pitched battles, the two hundred sieges, in which the Bearnese was personally present, had been occurrences of our own day. . . . Beneath the mask of perpetual, careless good-humour, lurked the keenest eye, a subtle, restless, widely-combining brain, and an iron will. Native sagacity had been tempered into consummate elasticity by the fiery atmosphere in which feebler natures had been dissolved. His wit was as flashing and as quickly unsheathed as his sword. Desperate, apparently reckless, temerity on the battle-field was deliberately indulged in, that the world might be brought to recognise a hero and a chieftain in a king. . . . Thus courageous, crafty, far-seeing, consistent, untiring, imperturbable, he was born to command, and had a right to reign. He had need of the throne, and the throne had still more need of him.”—Vol. i. pp. 45, 51-2.

Such was the man who now laid his iron grasp upon the Crown of France. His success would be fatal to the designs of Philip. The sluggish Mayenne, who spent as much time in eating as the Béarnese did in sleep, wielded the strength of the League in vain. Farnese turned to encounter an antagonist worthy even of his genius, and Holland was blessed with comparative repose. Some fifty years of strife, indeed, had still to be endured, before the times of her great trouble should be ended. But the struggle which remained, was a struggle for recognition, not for existence. In 1590 the victory was won. The foundations of the Batavian Commonwealth were secure. Freedom had made her home on those bleak and barren shores, from whence she was to go forth to bless the nations. That noble Republic was destined, in the years to come, to check the overgrown power of France as it

had checked the overgrown power of Spain ; to humble the pride of Louis as it had defeated the craft of Philip ; to send a deliverer to England ; to bear her share in the Triple Alliance, and in the great War of the Succession.

It was a glorious future. And, even at the time of which we write, the promise of that future was bright in the sky. Despite a desolating war which had raged unceasingly for twenty-five years, Holland was exhibiting strange signs of prosperity. Population was increasing, property rising in value, labour was in demand, wages were high. The beautiful manufactures for which Brussels and Valenciennes had long been celebrated, were becoming known in the cities of the Netherlands. Their commerce was extending itself every day. Their traffic with the Baltic was immense ; nay, in spite of the most stringent regulations, they maintained a constant intercourse with the Spanish possessions in the west ; and the power of trade brought the products of the mines of Potosi to sustain rebellion against the Lord of Peru. Nor was learning forgotten amid the horrors of the time. The Universities of Franeker and Leyden were founded, with all fitting academic pomp and circumstance, as if peace had been smiling on the State. "Truly," says Meternen, "the war had become a great benediction to the inhabitants." With peculiar pleasure the mind reposes on the spectacle of a people who had ventured so much for the best interests of mankind, reaping such a great and unexpected reward. Far other was the aspect of the provinces which had stooped to the yoke of Spain. "*La Révocation de l'édit de Nantes*," says Michelet, "*fut précisément l'exil de l'industrie française.*" The "reconciliation," as it was called, of 1583 had been the same to the Walloon Provinces. The successes of Farnese brought

a like evil fortune on Flanders and Brabant. Troops of exiles, skilled in the most productive branches of industry, fled from Popery and oppression, to enrich Holland, Friesland, and England. Great cities were depopulated ; fertile tracts of country had been turned into desert. Wolves littered in the deserted farm-houses ; men were torn to pieces by wild beasts at the very gates of Ghent. Nobles were converted into savage robbers, or supported life by degrading beggary in the towns which they once had ruled. The hum of busy labour was silent ; the trim gardens, the rich pastures, the blooming orchards, once the admiration of all strangers, had become wildernesses. Prices were high, employment impossible ; utter misery overspread the land, and barbarism seemed impending.

Such was the contrast, then, between free and servile states. The after careers of both were in harmony with the beginning. Holland advanced in glory and in well-being ; the "reconciled" provinces languished through long years under the alien domination of the Empire. In our own time we have seen them raised to independence ; and Belgium is, on the whole, a prosperous and a happy country. But even now the traveller, as he gazes on the deserted quays of Antwerp, and hears his footfall sound strangely loud amid the desolation of Ghent and Bruges, can hardly realise, by any effort of imagination, the grand tumult of life which filled these Flemish cities in the days when they were welcomed as allies by our own Edward III., when they scattered the chivalry of France at Courtrai, and held their ground so stubbornly on the field of Rosebecque. The history of the Netherlands is an illustration of the priceless value of freedom as well as a record of the great things which men have done to win it. It is a lesson fraught with

instruction—especially worthy of study now-a-days, when so many shallow thinkers, echoing the words of one or two men of genius, endeavour to appear wiser than their neighbours by under-estimating the blessings of constitutional government.

Mr. Motley has done his work well. His research has been unwearied and extensive, and he has given us the results of that research clearly and powerfully. If we compare him with Mr. Prescott, we shall find occasion to admire the good fortune by which each of these American historians has been led to select subjects best suited to his ability. Mr. Prescott is a beautiful and picturesque writer; but he is somewhat deficient in political feeling and political knowledge. This appears strikingly in his *Life of Philip II.*, unhappily left incomplete. He celebrates worthily the great defence of Malta against the Turks; he narrates, with almost unnecessary detail, the savage crusades against the Moriscoes; but he labours reluctantly when he has to penetrate the tortuous policy of the prince, when he has to unravel the complex web of European affairs. So, too, his edition of Robertson's *Charles v.* has not greatly aided us to an understanding of that most difficult period, when the whole system of modern politics had its birth. He is most at home among the scenes of adventures through which the early Spanish discoverers passed; and his genius has achieved its most signal triumphs in depicting the varying fortunes of Cortes and Pizarro. Mr. Motley, on the other hand, has far keener political sympathies; and is altogether, we venture to think, possessed of more intellectual vigour. He is never so happy as when exposing the incompetency of Burleigh, vindicating the sagacity of his favourite Walsingham, or detecting the subtle wiles of Farnese. Not that he wants the power of graphic narration. On the

contrary, he possesses it in a very high degree. His battle-pieces are almost Homeric in the vividness with which individual prowess is brought out. Nothing can be more exciting than the fight under the walls of Zutphen, or the desperate struggle on the dikes which sealed the fate of Antwerp.

We have alluded to Mr. Motley's research. His investigations into the manuscript records of the time have been so laborious, and he has brought to light so much curious and novel information, that it seems almost ungrateful to hint that we have somewhat too much of it. But the readers of this generation are an impatient race; and Mr Motley does tell us of intrigues, and abortive negotiations, and diplomatic nothings with a painful minuteness. Prolixity, indeed, seems the vice of American writers. Whether it be that art strives to imitate the gigantic scale on which nature manifests herself in the New World; or whether, as we rather fancy, all Americans are demoralised by the awful length of that message which is yearly delivered to them by their President, the fact is at once certain and deplorable. Two volumes of a "History of New England," by Mr. Palfrey, have lately appeared—a most valuable work, but which has failed to obtain popularity owing to this fault alone. Mr. Motley has not erred quite so fatally, but we must say that he tries the patience of his readers severely. The latter half of the first volume is far too full of quotations from letters and reports, and of dialogues which are given at full length. This last is a very favourite device. Throughout these volumes, we have repeated instances of "imaginary conversations" between the chief performers, after the fashion of that dreadful "controversy" at Melos, which, in the pages of Thucydides, has vexed the hearts of so many mortals. Against

this style of writing history we beg to enter our most decided protest. We value highly dramatic power in an historian. Its presence, indeed, makes all the difference between an historian and a mere annalist. But it must not develop itself in this particular way. The introduction of speeches and dialogues, purporting to be set forth in the very language used at the time, is now-a-days utterly out of place. It is intended to give an air of life; it only succeeds in giving an air of unreality. We fully believe Mr. Motley's assertion, that "no personage in these pages is made to write or speak any words save those which, on the best historical evidence, he is known to have written or spoken." Yet, even with this confidence, suspicions of unconscious invention will intrude upon the reader's mind. We feel ourselves brought back to the manner of Herodotus. We are told what Walsingham said to Bodman, and what the Queen said to Shirley, exactly after the fashion in which the Father of History tells us what Candaules said to Gyges, and how Solon moralised to Croesus. If Mr. Motley will indulge in this sort of thing, he should do it thoroughly. He should remember that, according to the best models of this style, no battle can be fought without much preliminary speechifying. The great William himself should have broken his accustomed silence, ere he entered the Meuse at the head of his troops; and we must anticipate, that even the fiery Maurice will be made to improve the occasion by an encouraging address before he leads the last charge at Nieupoort. Seriously, in writings of the present time, all this is utterly incongruous. The effect produced by it is simply grotesque. It is a mere trick, and an unsuccessful one—a trick to which Mr. Motley need not condescend. It is in his power to give life to his pages by other and more legitimate means.

Neither is it worthy of Mr. Motley to seek a source of attraction in strange contortions of style. As he advances with his work, he improves in this respect. The History of the United Netherlands is far less disfigured with uncouth expressions, meant to be effective, than was the Rise of the Dutch Republic. Yet, even in the latter work, a very superficial search will detect many eccentricities of language. We would not make much of a habit of speaking of "Henry Tudor," and "Elizabeth Tudor;" though we confess that this sounds somewhat strangely in our loyal, or perhaps we should say in our enslaved and degraded, ears. But such phrases as, a "champion to the utterance," "England was palpitating with the daily expectation," etc., and "Howard determined to wrestle no farther pull," are, to say the least, very inelegant. It is at once confused and tawdry writing to speak of the Earl of Leicester as "that luxuriant, creeping, flaunting, all-pervading existence, which struck its fibres into the mould, and coiled itself through the whole fabric of Elizabeth's life and reign." Nor is it much more accurate to describe canals as "those liquid highways, along which glide in phantom silence the bustle, and traffic, and countless cares of a stirring population." Will Mr. Motley think us very matter-of-fact, if we ask him how a bustle can possibly glide, or at all progress, or, indeed, do anything in phantom silence? We regret this passage the more, that what we must venture to call its absurdity spoils an otherwise faithful and picturesque description of the Hague. Neither can we think it a very fitting representation of the state of Holland after the death of William the Silent, to say that "the newly-risen Republic remained for a season nebulous, and ready to unsphere itself so soon as the relative attraction of other great powers should determine its absorption." We would really impress

on Mr. Motley the importance of cultivating simplicity of style, and of not reading one word of Carlyle until his own historical labours are concluded.

Should these remarks be read by Mr. Motley, we trust he will not misunderstand the spirit in which they are made. They spring from no vain love of fault-finding, but from a sincere desire that what we regard as blemishes should disappear from a great historical work. And we think it the more incumbent on us to make them, that Mr Motley proposes to write so much that will be valuable. It is his purpose to carry on the present book to the date of the Synod of Dort. He then hopes to take up the history of the Thirty Years' War, which broke out immediately thereafter, and to end the whole when repose was given to wearied Europe by the Peace of Westphalia. He will thus tell the story of a conflict which lasted, with one short interval, for about eighty years. He will accomplish this ambition all the more successfully if he strives after condensation and simplicity. That he will accomplish it well in any case, no one can doubt.

In addition to the other excellencies which we have already mentioned, Mr. Motley possesses the rare merit of being able to sympathise with all the various characteristics of the era of which he writes. Nor is this a slight matter; for he has selected an era which presents, perhaps, more varied characteristics than any other in the history of the world. There are certain periods of history in which the course of events seems to be regulated by individual actors—to follow the dictates of some imperial will. We come best to understand the epoch by studying the character of the man or men who ruled it. Such an epoch was the downfall of the Roman Republic. Again, there are other periods

of history in which national life is vigorous, over which the individual has little power; of these we can only form an intelligent conception by studying the influences brought to bear upon the masses, and the emotions which excited them to action. The times of which Mr. Motley has chosen to write combine both these characteristics in a very striking degree. National life was then coming into being; and the leaders of the time were among the greatest of the rulers of mankind. William the Silent, the Prince of Parma, Henry of Navarre, have left the impress of their characters indelibly on the history of their era. All Holland was then learning to be free, England was fighting for existence; and the spirit of Protestantism moved on the face of the waters. Mr. Motley has seen all this. He rightly estimates both the influence of individuals and the strength of popular feeling. He sympathises with both, and he makes his readers do the same. Therefore, from a study of his pages, we arrive at a true understanding of the whole marvel of the epoch. The great men live and move before us; yet the people, "as a lion, creeping nigher," are visible in the background. We are made to know the statesmanship and valour of William and his brothers, all dying for the infant State—of Henry of Navarre—of Norris and Walsingham; we appreciate even the reckless defiance which animated men like Brederode and Hohenlo; yet we are never allowed to forget the dogged resistance of the lowest Hollander; we are taught to admire the austere enthusiasm of the French Huguenots; and the determination which nerved all England, and made a hero of every English ship-boy, is always present to our minds. Even on the other side, the genius and influence of Farnese, is Mr. Motley's favourite theme; yet he delineates vividly

the mingled virtues and vices which gave such a peculiar power to the soldiery whom Farnese led. Higher praise can be bestowed on no historian ; and it is only Mr. Motley's due.

We heartily hope that health and strength will be given to him to accomplish the great task which he has set before himself. When accomplished, it will be a valuable addition to our historical literature, and will win for its author an enduring title to fame. Meanwhile we are truly grateful for what we have got. Readers of Mr. Motley's five volumes will not only find a most instructive and entertaining narrative ; they will also find a book written with the feeling and fervour with which all history should be written—a book which cannot fail to communicate, even to the most indifferent, some portion of the love of freedom and of truth which glows along its eloquent pages.

LORD MACAULAY'S PLACE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE.¹

ALL the writings of Lord Macaulay, which, in his own judgment and in the judgment of his friends, seem worthy of a permanent place in English literature, have now been given to the world. His whole literary career, from an epitaph on Henry Martyn, written at the age of twelve, to the biography of William Pitt, the work of mature fifty-nine, is before us. Unfortunately we have nothing more to look for. It is well known that but little of the History has been left in a state which will allow of its publication; and Lord Macaulay's place in the world of letters must therefore be determined by what we already possess. His "Biography," it is true, has yet to be written. From that source, however, we can hope to hear nothing more of the writer; and it may even be doubted whether any very valuable addition will thereby be made to our knowledge of the man. The lives of most public men reveal their characters, and this was, in an especial degree, true of Lord Macaulay. Without being in any sense an egotist, he yet felt so warmly on public affairs, that in writing and speaking on them he unconsciously revealed himself. No one can handle themes of which his heart is full, without affording glimpses of his real

¹ "Lord Macaulay's Place in English Literature."—[Reprinted from the "North British Review," No. 66. November 1860.]

nature. Lord Macaulay never wrote or spoke except on themes of which his heart was full ; and hence in his writings and speeches the character of the man is more truly, because less intentionally, portrayed than in the writings of professed egotists like Byron or Rousseau. Nor should it be forgotten, that in political life, although the highest offices were denied him, he played no undistinguished part. He shared in the great Reform battles, in the storms which preceded the fall of the Melbourne Ministry, and in the bitterness of the opposition which arrayed itself against Peel. In these contests, and in the results which they entailed, ample opportunities were afforded for displaying all the qualities which dignify or discredit the career of a politician. No portraiture has yet been given to the public of Lord Macaulay's social and domestic characteristics, and on these, therefore, a stranger must be silent. But we know enough to enable us to assign him his place in the republic of letters, and to ascertain how far, in the great game of politics, his opinions were worthy to be accepted, and his example to be followed.

It is not, we confess, without hesitation that we attempt this subject. Lord Macaulay's death is still so recent, his loss is so irreparable to that most important branch of literature, the historical literature of our country, that we find it no easy matter to discharge, with fitting composure, the duty of a critic. It is hard to be impartial in the midst of regret. When the feeling is strong upon us that the place which has been left vacant can never be supplied—that the task which has been left unaccomplished will never be completed—we are hardly able to be coldly impartial. So much, too, has been written on Macaulay, that it is impossible to write anything better than has been written already. But it is possible to

write something more. His works have been reviewed as they variously appeared ; but, until the present time, all his writings have never been brought together. It is now in our power to regard his labours as a whole, to notice the gradual development of style, to remark the growth of his ideas, and to admire the stability of his convictions. Such a study cannot be unimportant or uninteresting ; and we shall endeavour to pursue it with as much impartiality as our fervent admiration for the great historian whom we have lately lost will allow.

When Lord Macaulay's contributions to the "Edinburgh Review" first appeared in a collected form, the popularity which they obtained was quite unprecedented ; nor has it been approached since by any of the compilations of a similar nature which have become so common. Sydney Smith's articles alone, from the humour, the sound sense, and the knowledge of the world which they display, are worthy to be placed beside them. But Lord Macaulay took a wider sweep than the accomplished churchman, and lent to a more varied range of subject the charm of a more brilliant style. Any detailed criticism of these essays now-a-days would be absurd. Everybody has read them, and the verdict of public opinion has been definitely pronounced. They are a perfect mine of information. We have criticism on poetry, on essay writing, and on novel writing, in the articles on Byron, on Addison, and on Madame D'Arblay. We have elaborate portraits of the greatest English statesmen—of Burleigh, of Walpole, and of Chatham. We have solutions of the most vexed questions of English history, as in the article on Sir William Temple. We have the great difficulty of Church and State connection discussed upon rational principles. And, above all, we have the magnificent Indian disquisitions. It

is not too much to say, that an effect equal to the effect produced by "Lord Clive" and "Warren Hastings" was never produced by any two articles since article-writing began. In the paper on Clive, surprise was expressed at the general ignorance of Indian affairs, even among educated Englishmen. The publication of these two essays went far to dispel that ignorance. They could not, indeed, narrate the whole. Yet, any one who studies them attentively will at least have laid a good foundation for further inquiry. He will find that he has acquired not a little knowledge of the rise of our Indian empire, and of what may be called the Constitutional History of our rule in the East. And, what is of greater importance, he will find excited within him a very strong desire to learn more. India has been unhappy in her historians; but to these essays belongs the triumph that, in spite of the heaviness of Mill, the prolixity of Orme, and the commonplaceness of Elphinstone, Englishmen are at last beginning to know something of the "annals of that marvellous empire which valour without parallel has annexed to the throne of the Isles."

But Lord Macaulay, great though he was as an essayist, has won for himself a more enduring title to fame. His genius was essentially historical. His first essays were historical; his best essays were historical; and, last of all, we have the History itself by which his reputation will be finally determined.

All of us remember the manner in which the first two volumes of the History were received. No book, not even the best of the Waverley series, ever experienced such popularity. The "Times" devoted not only articles, but leaders, to its praise. Every Review in the country went into ecstasies. One notorious exception indeed there was; but that exception only

sufficed to bring out more forcibly the otherwise universal concord. Such harmony was too beautiful to last. Gradually faint murmurs of disapprobation made themselves heard. As years went on, these increased in number and deepened in tone, until the reaction reached a height on the appearance of volumes III. and IV. The greeting accorded to them differed markedly from that which had welcomed their more fortunate predecessors. Faults before unnoticed were pointed out; blemishes before hinted at were enlarged upon; beauties before brought into strong relief, were passed over or denied. The whirligig of time brought round revenges which might have satisfied even the soul of Mr. Croker. The "Edinburgh Review" itself, bound to render all suit and service to its great contributor, began to falter in its allegiance. This was no more than might have been expected. Such changes from one extreme of opinion to the opposite extreme, are as common in literature as in anything else. But the reactionary spirit leads into as great error as the original enthusiasm. Every part of Lord Macaulay's History possesses peculiar and appropriate merits; but were a choice forced upon us, we should give the preference to the third and fourth volumes over the other two. The first part of the work, indeed, possessed the charm of novelty. All the more prominent characters were brought on the stage; and the celebrated second chapter, from the nature of its subject, stands alone. The brilliant circle which surrounded Charles II. is painted with the pencil of Watteau, in colours rendered brighter by contrast with the sombre court of his successor. The fall of James from the height of almost absolute power to the long exile at St. Germain, is traced in a manner hardly less dramatic than that in which Thucydides traces the fate of the Sicilian expedition from the

bright midsummer morning on which it sailed, to its end in the quarries of Syracuse. Yet it is not too much to say that the varied powers of the historian are more displayed in the latter portion of his narrative. The siege of Derry is the most exciting thing in the book. The battle of Landen will bear a comparison even with the battle-pieces of Sir William Napier. The passage of the Boyne is finer than the rout of Sedgemoor. In these volumes, too, we have evidence of an ability, for the exercise of which the earlier volumes afforded no scope—we mean, the power of carrying on, without confusion, a complex story. From the beginning of the work down to the abdication of James we are seldom out of Britain, and the action is simple and continuous. After the accession of William, the plot deepens and widens. The subject changes, the scene shifts, and yet every transition is managed without effort and without abruptness. The historian passes easily from the campaigns in Ireland to the intrigues of St. James's, from the battle-fields of the Low Countries to the mountains of Scotland,—never confusing his readers—never unequal to his theme. Few qualities are rarer than this, and none is more important. Students of the fifth and sixth volumes of Mr. Froude's History will best appreciate its value, by having had most occasion to lament its absence. That gentleman's guidance is like the magic carpet in the "Arabian Nights." It whisks us about from country to country, over sea and over land, with a rapidity which takes our breath away, and disturbs all our ideas of space and time. Above all, the last part of Lord Macaulay's work is valuable, as telling us so much which it behoves us to know. Less picturesque it may be than what went before; but we are certain that it is more instructive. Volumes I. and II. tell of an overthrow;

volumes III. and IV. tell of a reconstruction—a work far greater in itself, immeasurably greater, in that it has been enduring.

In the progress of its development, the political constitution of England has been exposed to two great shocks, arising out of two great convulsions in the minds of the people: one, the change of the national faith at the Reformation; the other, the long struggle of the Commons against the Crown. When William of Orange appeared on the stage, both convulsions—the change of religion and the struggle for liberty—had left deep scars. The empire was torn with religious dissensions; all constitutional forms were unsettled. From this chaos William had to evoke order; those scars it was his to heal. His reign was the new birth of our constitution—the real beginning of the modern history of England. How he accomplished his arduous task, how, under his wise guidance, the constitution recovered the shocks it had undergone, and, renewing its youth, gave promise of a strong and lasting existence,—this is the theme, than which no theme can be nobler, of the concluding volumes of Lord Macaulay's History. The position and influence of the monarchy were defined by the Bill for Settling the Coronation Oath, and the Bills for Settling the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy. The clergy and the Tories retained sufficient power to defeat the Comprehension Bill, and to maintain the test. But by the Toleration Act, religious differences were, in part at least, composed; and Dissenters experienced the strange freedom of being allowed to follow, without molestation, the dictates of their consciences. The ecclesiastical constitution of Scotland was fixed, and fixed upon such principles, that, had it not been wantonly altered by the advisers of Anne, it would have been spared the shock

of so many secessions. The Bank of England was founded ; the national debt began ; the whole financial system of the country had its origin. English politics acquired the characteristics which they retain to the present day, by the formation of the first regular Ministry under Sunderland. Party warfare lost the violence and cruelty which had before disgraced it, and became animated by a comparative moderation of spirit ever after that Act of Grace, the granting of which constitutes one of William's purest titles to fame. The scandal of our State trials was swept away by the law which secured to the judges their seats during life or good behaviour, and by the law for regulating trials in cases of treason ; and, above all, the liberty of the press was established.

All these great changes—changes which made the England of 1697 hardly recognisable by the statesmen of 1687—are narrated in the historian's best manner. They are the topics of which Lord Macaulay is most thoroughly master, and in the handling of which he is most perfectly at home. Brilliant as are his pictures of courts, stirring as are his scenes of battle, it is in describing social ameliorations and parliamentary struggles that his genius has achieved its most signal triumphs.

Yet, in spite of all this, these volumes never enjoyed the popularity of their forerunners. Enemies soon found this out. The mere caprice of reaction had dictated the general judgment, but hostile critics readily set themselves to justify that judgment. At first they had, for the most part, been frightened into silence ; but now they took heart of grace, and spoke. To a certain extent this is a compliment—*qui n'a pas de lecteurs, n'a pas d'adversaires*—but it has gone on too long. Even death put no period to detraction. Especially vehement have been the assaults contained in a series of articles in "Blackwood's Magazine," com-

mencing with praises of Presbyterianism in August 1856, and ending with praises of Dundee in September 1860. The ruling motive of these articles has not been to vindicate the reputation of the departed great, but to diminish the just fame of the historian. To accomplish this end, positions the most contradictory have been taken up, pleas the most inconsistent have been urged. Covenanters and Claverhouse, Highlanders and Western Hillmen, Marlborough and Penn, are all to be defended with equal zeal, if so only Lord Macaulay may be abused. Foolish jesting does not deserve, random assertion does not admit of, a reply. Such opponents are, like the opponents of Gibbon, "men over whom victory was a sufficient humiliation."

The defence of Penn, however, has been differently conducted. Mr. Hepworth Dixon first took up the case; his arguments were condensed by a Mr. Paget; and their joint advocacy has been so plausible, that on one or two points Lord Macaulay has seen fit to answer. He has reiterated his belief, that it was the Quaker himself, and not a lowly namesake, who negotiated that scandalous business of the little girls of Taunton for the maids of honour, and he has given his reasons for that belief. He has justified the language he employed with regard to Penn's advances to Alderman Kiffin; and he has maintained the correctness of his account of Penn's conduct in the affair of Magdalen College. Those answers, in our judgment altogether convincing, appear only in the small seven volume edition of 1858. This is not as it should be. The notes containing those replies should be incorporated in every future edition of the History. The publishers will culpably neglect the duty which they owe to Lord Macaulay's reputation unless they look to this. On no point, however trivial, can it be un-

important to establish his accuracy.¹ It would be out of place to transcribe here Lord Macaulay's arguments; and, indeed, our space prevents us from entering into the depth of the Penn controversy. The more fully this is done, the more will the trustworthiness of the historian be brought out; but to accomplish the task thoroughly, would in itself afford material for an article, and that not a very short one.

The most hostile critics have failed, in our opinion, to convict Lord Macaulay of misinterpreting his authorities. But some assailants have occupied a different ground, and have accused him of a different fault,—the fault of carelessness in selecting his authorities. This is an error to which French historians are especially prone. M. Thierry, for example, is a conspicuous offender. With him, one authority—so that it be quotable—is as good as another. Nothing tends so much to mislead. The reader is thrown off his guard. An imposing array of names, formally cited, allays any suspicion. He never thinks of inquiring further. He is lulled into a false sense of security, and accepts the assertions of the historian as all resting upon equally good foundations. This charge has been particularly urged against the description of the social position of the clergy, in the celebrated second chapter of the History. Now it can be easily shown—indeed, Macaulay's assailants have themselves succeeded in showing—that his sketch is true to his authorities,—that it is, in every particular, corroborated by the literature of the period. But then the question

¹ As a matter of fact, the majority of readers have never seen the small edition. One of the latest critics, for example, calmly assumes, as a matter beyond dispute, the confusion between William Penn and George Penne in the Taunton business, and exultingly refers to it as an instance of Macaulay's inaccuracy. The critic, when he wrote, had evidently never seen Macaulay's arguments in support of his original statement.

remains, What was that literature, and who were those authorities? Mr. Churchill Babington, in his "Character of the Clergy, etc., considered," exults greatly in the fact that one of them—Oldham—was an Atheist; and another—T. Wood—was a Deist. The inference that both were on that account liars, is, perhaps, rather rapid. And even if we ascribe to them an irresistible tendency to falsehood, we must not forget that, like Captain Absolute's invaluable servant, they were bound to lie so as to be believed. The question simply is, how far the satirical and popular literature of the day may be relied upon as being true? Now the first object of a satirist is to be read, the next is to produce an effect; but in order that he may do either, it is requisite that he keep within the bounds of probability. A gross caricature can never be a powerful satire. While, therefore, the satirist must exaggerate in order to attract, he must yet, in all his exaggeration, preserve a certain measure of truth. If satirists represent a class of the community as being exclusively composed of men of low origin, we may safely assume that high birth among that class is rare. If the comedians of a whole century agree in making the members of a certain profession invariably marry servants, we may conclude that the alliances contracted by that profession were not, as a general rule, exalted.¹ Take the literature of our own day.

¹ Lord Macaulay has given deep offence by his remarks on this subject. That those remarks are unpleasant, however, is more obvious than that they are unfounded. A century later, a novelist, who had no dislike to the Church, describes his most perfect heroine as allowing a marriage between her waiting-maid and a "young Levite" attached to her establishment. And, considering that she belonged to the household of the virtuous Pamela, Miss Polly Barlow had been very near those frailties which, according to Swift, make it prudential to give up hopes of the steward, and fall back upon the chaplain. A waiting-maid of uncertain virtue, even though the waiting-maid of a Pamela, would hardly be considered a very appropriate alliance for a clergyman now-a-days.

“Punch” is our professed satirist; the “Times” habitually indulges in exaggerated writing. Yet we suspect that a discerning historian could draw a fair picture of the manners and customs of the period from the pages of these two periodicals. Any one, however, who attempts such a task has a reasonable claim upon our indulgence; for it is only by the greatest industry and the most unerring tact that success can be approached. At best there will always be many who refuse to accept the results. Such refusal, however, should be courteously conveyed. In the case we are supposing, the author should not hastily be reproached with carelessness or with wilful inaccuracy. He may, indeed, have blundered. He may have trusted too much to one satirist; he may have mistaken the spirit of another. But if past conditions of society are to be reproduced at all, this risk must be run. Lord Macaulay has faced it, and has been bitterly abused in consequence. He is able, indeed, to quote authorities more imposing than those to whom we have referred. The Grand Duke Cosmo, Lord Clarendon, and even the injunctions of Queen Elizabeth, corroborate, in various minute points, the view he has taken. But, as a whole, the case is undoubtedly rested on the representations of satirists and popular writers. The matter is not one which admits of being definitely settled by argument. It is of no avail to be true to your authorities, when the value of those authorities is denied. And as no more valid authorities than those rejected satirists can be cited, the question must be left to every man to determine for himself, or to leave alone, as he likes best.

Lord Macaulay’s account of the Highlands and of the Highlanders is very much in the same position as his sketch of the clergy. Here also, it is urged con-

temptuously, his chief authorities are satirists and Cockneys. Now it is perfectly true that the opinions expressed by the satirists and entertained by the Cockneys of that day, with regard to Highlanders or anything else, are of historical value, and well worthy to be preserved. For though it be the fashion to sneer at Cockneys now, at that time the inhabitants of London were, in wealth, power, and intelligence, greatly in advance of any other part of the kingdom. But the fact that such opinions were entertained is one thing; the truth of such opinions is a very different thing. The difficulty of presenting a fair picture of the Highlanders of 1689 is indeed extreme. At that date they were absurdly caricatured; in our own day they have been not less absurdly exalted into heroes of romance.

“Thus it has chanced,” says the historian, “that the old Gaelic institutions and manners have never been exhibited in the simple light of truth. Up to the middle of the last century they were seen through one false medium; they have since been seen through another. Once they loomed dimly through an obscuring and distorting haze of prejudice; and no sooner had that fog dispersed, than they appeared bright with all the richest tints of poetry. The time when a perfectly fair picture could have been painted has now passed away. The original has long disappeared; no authentic effigy exists; and all that is possible is to produce an imperfect likeness by the help of two portraits, one of which is a coarse caricature, and the other a masterpiece of flattery.”

The “imperfect likeness” thus produced is not a very attractive one.¹ It mightily offended all the victims of that Celtic mania, which, for some years

¹ Its untruthfulness, however, is not so clear. Among other arguments in its favour, it recommends itself to our acceptance by agreeing, in all essentials, with the picture drawn by an historian so unprejudiced and so painstaking as Mr. Burton.

past, has been making Scotland ridiculous. Foolish men who like to wear kilts, foolish young ladies who cry over ballads about Prince Charlie, and foolish writers who affect a sentimental and unreal Jacobitism in order to move such tears, cannot endure that their fond delusions should be swept away. Loudly, therefore, has Lord Macaulay been accused of cherishing a bitter hatred towards Scotland. This absurd cry has been echoed by many who bear no love to the Celts, but who think that the historian has borne too hardly on Scottish statesmen. Both grounds of accusation are equally unfounded. Lord Macaulay, it is true, has invested the Highlanders with no false romantic attractions ; and he has spoken of men like Perth and Melfort in no very gentle terms. But he did not, therefore, undervalue the Scottish character, or fail to appreciate duly the true glories of Scottish history. He only judged more wisely than his critics where these glories are to be found. He would not seek them in the annals of an aristocracy, at their best never faithful to the cause of their country's freedom ; and, at the times of which he wrote, hopelessly degraded into a tribe of unprincipled place-hunters. Nor would he seek them in the exploits of half-naked savages, whose love of independence was but an impatience of law, whose loyalty was but a longing to quarrel and a lust to plunder. It is among the middle classes of the Lowlands that the best characteristics of Scotchmen have ever been displayed. Those characteristics—love of freedom, zeal for religion, attachment to order—are virtues of which any nation may be justly proud ; and they are virtues which Lord Macaulay was the last man to esteem lightly. A more eulogistic estimate of the Scotch character is nowhere to be found than in the article on Burleigh and his Times.

The inaccuracy of the history, therefore, often as it has been asserted, has not been satisfactorily proved.¹ Perhaps no history has ever been exposed to such searching criticism. Some few mistakes have been detected, which the author has not been slow to correct. Considering the extent of the work, and the details upon which it enters, it is astonishing that those mistakes have been so few, and upon matters so unimportant. And, on the other hand, the severe scrutiny to which the book has been subjected, fairly entitles us to assume that no inaccuracies have escaped notice. Guizot tells us that he read the "Decline and Fall" carefully three times over. After the first reading, he thought the historian superficial and untrue. A second perusal modified this hasty judgment; and, at the close of the third, the belief was forced upon him, that Gibbon's trustworthiness and research were alike admirable. Candid readers who do the same justice to Lord Macaulay, will arrive, we think, at the same conclusion.

The charge of *partiality* has been urged with not less vehemence than the charge of inaccuracy. Now, whatever may be thought of his delineations of individual character, it must, we should imagine, be conceded that this historic vice is not apparent in his

¹ A late critic in the "Saturday Review" (August 4, 1860), allows himself such license of expression as to talk of "Macaulay's perversions and inventions," and "his violations of nature and distortions of history." Stronger language cannot well be imagined. It would require some modification if applied to Mitford's Greece. Now, it will hardly be believed that this condemnation is totally unsupported by facts. Throughout the article in which it appears, not a single instance is given even of inaccuracy—there is no attempt made to bring one forward. We take no exception to the strength of the language, had it been justified. First prove that an historian perverts and invents, and then condemn him as severely as you please. But to pronounce sentence with this violence, without proof, or any attempt at proof—thus to sneer down the work of a lifetime—thus to prejudice readers without once appealing to their reason, admits of no excuse.

treatment of parties. He does not, indeed, conceal which of the opposing interests commands his sympathies. It would have been impossible to have done so; it would have been foolish to have made the attempt; for, in truth, it was no vulgar conflict which then raged, and on the event depended no slight or ignoble issues. In the struggle of the Great Rebellion we can imagine doubts as to where the right was to be found—fears that the triumph of neither party would be attended with unmixed good. In the political strifes subsequent to 1688, principles less important have been involved; Oromasdes and Arimanes have hardly entered the lists. But, at the Revolution, we can conceive no doubts as to the merits of the dispute: we can sympathise with no fears for the result of William's victory over James; and the stake was the future destiny of England. Freedom and Protestantism against tyranny and Popery—"the side of loyalty, prerogative, church, and king, against the side of right, truth, civil and religious freedom"—that was the contest which then fell to be determined, and the result of such a contest no man can deem a matter of small account. But while Macaulay makes no pretence of an unreal and undesirable indifference, he is not therefore unjust. He rejoices that victory rested where she did; he appreciates the efforts and the sacrifices by which she was won; but he does not the less see clearly and condemn strongly the errors and the crimes by which victory was stained. The excesses of contending factions are visited with rigid justice. An even balance is held between them; we have the one weight and the one measure. The unscrupulousness of the Whigs during the madness of the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Bill; the unscrupulousness of the Tories when reaction and prudent tactics had brought

round the day of their revenge, are denounced with equal severity. The murder of Strafford meets with no milder sentence than the murders of Russell or of Sidney. The boots and thumbscrews which delighted James in the torture-chamber at Edinburgh, are not allowed to gain a forgiveness for the assassination of Sharp or the rabbling of the western clergy. To few passages that we know of in history would we point, as animated by a spirit of more perfect fairness, than the sketch of the origin and characteristics of the two great parties which have so long struggled for ascendancy in the State.

But with individuals the case is said to be different. Here, it is alleged, the historian indulges whims and fancies, forms likings and dislikings without ground, and expresses them without moderation. Now, impartiality in history assumes various forms. Among the possessors of this virtue many would unhesitatingly assign to Thucydides the foremost place. But a little reflection will convince us that, in the proper sense of the term, he does not possess it at all. He seems impartial because he never judges. Nothing is more extraordinary in literature than the calmness—amounting to indifference—with which he contemplates the extremes of wickedness and the extremes of goodness. The most exalted patriotism never warms him into admiration; the blackest treason calls forth no censure. On two occasions alone, so far as we can remember, are his feelings with regard to his character permitted to appear; one, when the mention of Cleon excites his personal animosity; the other when he wastes his sympathy over the incompetent respectability of Nicias. It is easy to trace in this unnatural calmness of the moral nature the sceptical influences of the Sophists, and the confusing influences of the state of warfare into

which the Greece of his day was thrown. In another age, similar causes, in an exaggerated form, produced kindred though worse results. In mediæval Italy, the moral indifference of Thucydides deepened into the moral obliquity of Machiavelli. Some French writers—as Mignet and M. Comte—share in this quality of the great Grecian, deriving it possibly from similar causes. Such writers cannot be properly called impartial, because the plan which they adopt affords no scope for the exercise of the virtue. Of English historians, the most impartial, perhaps, is Gibbon. In him this arises from a sarcastic disregard of the whole matter; his narrative sweeps along far beyond the reach of agitation from the struggles and passions of which it treats. Of a different stamp, again, is the impartiality of Mr. Hallam, which consists in abusing everybody; and different from any is the impartiality of Sir James Mackintosh, which consists in abusing nobody.

Now, properly speaking, none of these tendencies constitutes true impartiality. An historian is not bound to abstain either from forming opinions or from expressing them. He is under no obligation either to relinquish his right of judgment or to preserve silence as to what his judgments are. On the contrary, it is his duty to form an estimate of the characters whose actions he records, and to present that estimate to his readers. If he neglects to do this, he fails in the chief part of his undertaking. For, after all, the real use of studying the annals of past times is to acquire a knowledge of the men of past times. History, in its best aspect, is but biography on a large scale. The old idea of the past interpreting the future—of philosophy teaching by examples—is very much exploded. It sounds imposing; yet it contains little real meaning. Events so seldom repeat themselves, that the

experience is at best of doubtful utility; and the philosophy is but the chance reflections of the writer. The philosophy of history in the hands of Sir A. Alison is but a sorry affair. History, like metaphysics, is daily becoming more esteemed for its true advantages,—the light which it throws on human nature—showing how powerfully it is modified by circumstances—what there is in it which no circumstances have strength to alter,—in a word, for the assistance which it lends to “the proper study of mankind.” But in order to afford us this light, in order to teach us how to distinguish what is transitory from what is permanent in morality, historians must state their views of character, and display impartiality, not by concealing these views, but in forming them. Silence is not required, but caution before speaking. The charge of partiality can then only be justly brought, when, from a knowledge of the principles professed by any statesman, we can certainly foretell what will be the estimate formed of that statesman’s character. A writer who always favours Whigs; a writer who always favours Tories; a writer who never has a good word for a Catholic; a writer who never shows a generous appreciation of Protestants;—all these are equally partial and misleading narrators of past events. But such leanings must be shown uniformly and deliberately. An historian may be keenly alive to demerits in some instances; he may be too blind to faults in others; he may sometimes even take up false conceptions altogether; but unless he can be proved to do so wilfully and on wrong grounds, he is not fairly open to the reproach of partiality.

If we adopt this test, to call Macaulay partial is absurd. With him, no man’s politics are a protection or a cause of offence. If he speaks in language justly severe of Tories like Lauderdale and Sunderland,

does he use language at all milder when he speaks of Whigs like Marlborough or Breadalbane? Are the Church and State virtues of Hyde less commended than the democratic virtues of Sidney? An unruly prater like Sir Patrick Hume, or a wild fanatic like Ferguson, meets with no more mercy than the apostate Melfort or the savage L'Estrange. Can it be maintained that he bears too hardly on the mixed character of Danby, or fails to mark the faults which marred the gentle nature of Shrewsbury? The accomplishments of Somers move him to no warmer admiration than the integrity of Nottingham; and he speaks in language of unfeigned reverence of the almost ideal perfection of Ken. The list might be indefinitely extended. In truth, had he been more partial, he would have been less blamed. The vehemence of his assailants, and the opposite quarters from which the assaults have come, afford the strongest proof that he has exposed the misrepresentations and offended the prejudices of all parties alike. Had he taken a side, writers on that side would have supported him. As it is, the zealots of every faction have been hot against him, while no passions have been roused in his defence. From the first he has been hated by the extremes of all sects, and this, in our opinion, constitutes his best claim upon our confidence. One innocent critic cannot get over his condemnation of the Whig Marlborough. We would suggest a very simple explanation. It is merely that he does not apportion his praise or blame according to political considerations.

Undoubtedly it behoved Lord Macaulay to form his views of character with fairness and with care, for he has not been slack in impressing those views on his readers. They are reiterated with a persistency and a strength of language only to be justified by a pro-

found conviction of their truth. Marlborough cannot be robbed at St. Albans, without our hearing how long and how bitterly he regretted his lost money; Edward Seymour never steps on the stage without his pride, his licentiousness, and his meanness being made present to our minds. All this we are free to think not merely defensible, but a necessary result of the life which Lord Macaulay has given to his narrative. His characters are not allegories of the virtues or the vices, but beings of flesh and blood, who act in a manner deserving of praise or blame, and who must be praised or blamed accordingly, if we are to breathe the atmosphere of a moral world at all. In the severity of his judgments we can find no good ground of complaint. The statesmen of the Revolution deserve no gentle handling. People are fond of crying out, in a sort of feeble wonderment, Can the men to whom England owes her freedom have really been such a set of knaves? Can an evil tree bring forth good fruit, etc.? Somewhat in the same way, Mr. Froude assumes that all the known virtues adorned Henry VIII., because the Reformation was hurried on by the matrimonial proceedings of that prince: an ingenious style of argument, according to the principle of which, wise commercial legislation will suffice to canonise Richard III., and the Edict of Nantes prove incontestably the ascetic morality of Henri Quatre.

The fact is that the men of that time were not good men,—in a sense, evil trees *did* bring forth good fruit. The task of governing England in the middle of the seventeenth century was the very thing which imparted to them a peculiar stamp. They were bred in times of trouble, their public life was a series of dark and dangerous intrigues, in which men shared at the risk of their necks. Statesmen who spend their existence in sudden and violent political changes, ending

with a revolution and the overthrow of a dynasty, do not escape unmarked with the scars of battle. They will rarely be men of high principle and steadfast adherence to truth; but they will be subtle in counsel, prompt in action, regardless of pledges, skilful in deceit, keen-sighted to discern the signs of change, swift to avert its consequences by a timely treason. Such men were the statesmen of the times of the later Stuarts. Lord Macaulay has himself compared them to the French statesmen of the last generation, when the "same man was a servant of the Republic, of Bonaparte, of Louis XVIII., of Bonaparte again after his return from Elba, of Louis again after his return from Ghent." Lord Wharton, an old Puritan, in the debate on the Abjuration Bill, declared with amusing simplicity, that he had spent his political life in taking oaths which he had not kept, and that he would not be a party to laying any more such snares for the consciences of his neighbours. Human nature is always the same. In times far distant, the same causes produced the same mental phenomena among the statesmen of the Grecian Republics. The prescience and the treacheries of Themistocles may be compared to the prescience and the treacheries of Shaftesbury; Alcibiades, under whom the Athenians were never defeated by sea or land, and who so cruelly betrayed his country to her bitterest foe, presents a striking parallel to Marlborough, always victorious and never faithful.

How great soever may be the obligations which we owe to men of this stamp, to forgive them everything on that account is surely to forget a very old rule of morality. But, in truth, our debt to most of the leading statesmen of that period is very small. What they did was to serve James until James's tyranny began to reach themselves, to squabble for places

under William when William ascended the throne, and as soon as they had got those places, to commence intriguing with St. Germain's. The lump was indeed leavened with material of a different sort. We owe the perfected success of the Revolution not to these men, but to the few conscientious Whigs who opposed James from the first, and the few upright Tories who served William faithfully when the kingly power had been transferred. We owe it to the zeal of such men as Burnet, to the integrity of such men as Nottingham, to the ability of Somers, to the serene intellect of Halifax. Above all, we owe it to the steadiness of the bulk of the people hating Popery and despotism, to the sagacity and tolerance of the Prince who won, to the bigotry, folly, and obstinacy of the Prince who lost. We owe little to a body of unscrupulous though experienced statesmen, who served and deserted both princes with an edifying impartiality, who condescended occasionally to guide the fortunes of the Revolution, and who did not betray the cause of the Revolution more than half-a-dozen times. It is not services like these which can win the gratitude of posterity for looser principles and not greater abilities than those of Fouché or Talleyrand. History has another duty to discharge than to whine over such offenders a plaintive "surely they can't have been so very bad." There is nothing praiseworthy in that affected amiability which persists in devising excuses for what is inexcusable, which shrinks from an expression of honest indignation. It has its origin in mere cowardice,—in a reluctance to look at things as they really are. In everyday life nothing is more irritating or more tiresome; and it is too bad that the same folly should be imported into history. We greatly prefer the severity of Mr. Hallam to the overstrained lenity of Sir James Mackintosh.

We have mentioned Marlborough. Upon what grounds the manifold perfidies of this man have been defended, we are wholly at a loss to conceive. We would not try him by a high standard. We would give him the full benefit of the principle, that men are to be judged according to the sentiments of their own time. We think, indeed, that this principle is at present carrying us rather too far. In general, it is doubtless sound; but its indefinite extension may be dangerous. Circumstances produce an almost boundless effect upon opinion; but there is something permanent in morality over which circumstances have no effect. It is not good that the power of circumstance should be strengthened—that the changeful element in morality should be magnified, and the abiding element overlooked—that historians should suffer right and wrong to melt into each other, as if no real distinction could be maintained. The present style of “making allowance” savours too much of the easy indifference of Lucio. It tends to excuse all vice, and to obscure all virtue,—degrading the latter into an accident, exalting the former into a discreet, almost an unavoidable conformity to the spirit of the age. It is the duty of history to oppose that morality which forgives everything which contemporaries did not condemn, which would palliate the crimes of Cæsar Borgia, which can see nothing very revolting in the atrocities of the Black Prince at Limoges. But even if we strain this principle to the utmost, it cannot avail Marlborough. To him was assigned by his contemporaries an easy pre-eminence in treason over all the traitors who surrounded the last Stuart. In the bitterest extremity of despair, James declared that Churchill could never be forgiven. When he sought forgiveness by acts as base as those by which he had incurred hatred, even the desperate Jacobites would not trust him. In their

greatest extremity they gave up the most feasible plot ever formed against William, simply because it had been suggested and was to be carried out by Marlborough. Yet the men who thus judged him did not know his worst. Among his compeers his character alone was darkened with military dishonour, as well as by political treason. Even Russell fought honestly at La Hogue. "Understand this," said he to Lloyd, "if I meet them I fight them ; ay, even if his Majesty were on board." Marlborough fought too, when it was for his own interest, and he never failed to fight successfully. But when he wanted to "hedge" politically, he was restrained by no professional feeling. He was faithless to his colours as readily as to his promises. Desertion was as easy to him as lying. Even this was not all. Few soldiers, however depraved, will wish to bring about the defeat and death of their fellow-soldiers. Marlborough, without a pang, betrayed Talmash and eleven hundred Englishmen to destruction. The infamy of having revealed to James the intended attack on Brest exceeds, to our thinking, almost any infamy recorded in history. Lord Macaulay's estimate of Marlborough is much the same as that formed by a great writer of our day, who, though not a professed historian, is, we suspect, as shrewd a judge of the men of the past, as he has shown himself to be of the men of the present. So, too, with regard to Claverhouse, the similarity between the portraiture drawn by Macaulay and the portraiture drawn by Scott is very striking. The judgments passed upon the character are widely different ; but the representations given of the character are very much the same. The historian considers no amount of courage and ability should win forgiveness for wilful oppression, for utter contempt for the rights, and utter callousness to the sufferings of others. The

novelist, less judicial and more imaginative, forgets the bad citizen and the cruel oppressor in the distinguished soldier, and the faithful adherent to a fallen dynasty. Yet, as the historian admits the professional ability, so the novelist does not conceal the hardness of heart. Claverhouse paints his own character in a conversation with Morton during the celebrated ride from Drumshinnel to Edinburgh. The total want of conscience and the absolute indifference to human life which he there avows, is more than sufficient to justify any condemnation.

Every reader remembers the Marlborough of Esmond ; but some may have forgotten the following passage in the lecture on the first George :—

“ We are not the historic muse, but her ladyship’s attendant, tale-bearer, valet de chambre—for whom no man is a hero ; and as yonder one steps from his carriage to the next handy conveyance, we take the number of the hack ; we look all over his stars, ribbons, embroidery ; we think within ourselves, O you unfathomable schemer ! O you warrior invincible ! O you beautiful smiling Judas ! What master would you not kiss or betray ? What traitor’s head, blackening on the spikes on yonder gate, e’er hatched a tithe of the treason which has worked under your periwig ? ”

What have we to set against all this ? That he was a man of surpassing ability, and very fond of his wife. As to the latter plea, we can only say that nothing else was to be expected from his singular prudence. It was even more important to be on good terms with his imperious spouse, than with the Dutch deputies. But, though his wife may have been beholden to him for his love and obedience, we cannot see that his country was. Let us cheerfully award him all praise as a complaisant husband. Yet meditations on the domestic happiness of Duchess Sarah would have

afforded but insufficient consolation to the dying Talmash. This plea is simply childish, but the former opens up a wide subject. As an administrator, Marlborough might have rivalled Richelieu ; as a warrior, he excelled Condé. Are all his crimes to be, on that account, forgiven ? Is history thus to make intellect her god ? The question is not unworthy of a little attention.

Our most popular living historian has announced the doctrine, that force of character covers all sins. Completed success requires unreserved honour ; the energy which deserves, though it may fail to command success, obtains respectful admiration. A man who achieved the heights of Cromwell can have committed no fault ; our sympathies are asked even for the imperfect career of Mirabeau. The greatest work of this new philosophy has been the glorification of Frederic Wilhelm. When that amiable monarch deserts his allies in a peculiarly blackguard manner, he is described as "advancing in circuits spirally, with his own reasonable private aim sun-clear to him all the time." When he shoots the companion of his son's flight, and is hardly restrained, by the outcry of all Europe, from shooting his son, we are told that we are not yet sufficiently enlightened to pass a judgment on the proceeding. So, too, when Cromwell sullies his fame by the butcheries of Wexford and Drogheda, he is "precipitated out of eternities," and "bathed in eternal splendours ;" and we are ordered to suspend our opinion of Mirabeau until some new moralities have been revealed to us, those which we have at present being insufficient for the purpose. Among Mr. Carlyle's imitators, this tendency assumes shapes yet more fantastic. It lowers history into advocacy in the hands of Mr. Froude ; it elevates the use of red paint by Queen Elizabeth into the dignity of a sacrament

in the hands of Mr. Kingsley ; it drives Mr. Motley into unworthy sophistry in the attempt to extenuate the equivocations by which William the Silent dimmed his uprightness, that he might win the daughter of the Elector Maurice. This is not merely ridiculous, it is positively pernicious. It deprives us of any standard whereby to judge human actions. It is of no great moment what opinions we may form of historical characters ; but it is of the greatest moment that our ideas of right and wrong should not be confused. As the new moralities necessary to justify Mr. Carlyle's strange enthusiasms are not likely to be speedily made manifest, we may as well have the old moralities, which have so long served us, left undisturbed. To this Lord Macaulay's method presents a marked contrast. He never, indeed, fails to make due allowance for men endowed with dangerous gifts, or tried by severe temptations. He never bears harshly on crimes committed, not from sordid or unworthy motives, but in pursuit of a great public end, and under the influence of extreme or ill-regulated zeal for the public interests. No writer has done more to win for Cromwell his proper place in the regards of Englishmen. Carlyle, in his "Hero-worship," declares that "Cromwell is yet on the gibbet, and finds no hearty apologist anywhere." A "hearty apologist," in the Carlylian sense, he certainly had not found. But twenty years before Carlyle's lecture was delivered, Macaulay had sketched a flattering portrait of Cromwell, in the dialogue between Cowley and Milton ; and eight years later, in his essay on Hallam, he filled up this sketch into the most brilliant and most truthful likeness of the great usurper which can be found in the language. But, on the other hand, he does not disregard the plain rules of morality which are understood by plain men. Rigid moralists will pronounce

him even too generous in his estimate of Machiavelli ; too much inclined to what he calls the doctrine of set-off in his accounts of Clive and Hastings. Yet he never supports the teaching of "the Prince," because the author of the Prince suffered exile, torture, and degradation, for the cause of his country's freedom ; he does not palliate forgery, because forgery was committed by the conqueror of Bengal ; he does not excuse cruelty and robbery, because there was no extreme of the one or the other which Hastings was not prepared to perpetrate for the sake of the Indian revenue. We verily believe that had Mr. Carlyle written the history of India, he would have made out that for a British soldier to be guilty of the crime which deceived Omichund, was merely "to advance spirally with his own aim sun-clear in view ;" that the horrors of Rohilcund, and the spoliation of the princesses of Oude, were but measures of energetic administration, easily to be justified by the principles of the new morality. Such indiscreet advocacy is twice mischievous—evil in its effect upon readers, unjust towards those whom it endeavours to defend. It excites a spirit of antagonism. A determination on the part of a writer to see no evil will produce a tendency on the part of readers to see evils which do not really exist. We feel justly irritated when Mr. Carlyle denies that we can worthily admire Cromwell, so long as we condemn the execution of Charles ; it is hard that Mr. Froude should forbid us to feel akin with the gay and gallant youth of Henry, unless we also sympathise with his cruel and imperious old age. Not even in defence of William is Macaulay thus indiscriminating. He does not excuse the massacre of Glencoe on the ground which would certainly have been occupied by the author of the "Latter-day Pamphlets," that the Macdonalds were a pack of unruly

thieves. He argues that William was kept in ignorance of the real design : that is a question of fact, as to which he may or may not be mistaken. But he never palters with right or wrong in the attempt to blind us as to the nature of the deed ; he does not hesitate to denounce as a grave crime the forgiveness which William, upon this as on another occasion, extended to his guilty servants. It is thus that history should be written, if history is to instruct and to elevate.

Among the many excellencies which have combined to render Lord Macaulay, on the whole, the most popular writer of the day, his style is not the least deserving of attention. It is curious to remark how soon that style was formed, and how little it ever changed. His early writings, indeed, are, as he himself admits, overlaid with a gaudy ornament which his mature taste rejected. The ornate essay on Milton contrasts strangely with the purity of the essay on Pitt. But the marked characteristics of the style—the short sentences, the absence of pronouns, the use of antitheses—remained always the same. The last of these peculiarities has been blamed as tending to mislead. We question very much whether, in the hands of Macaulay, it ever misled anybody. Antitheses are pernicious, either when they are so forced as to throw no light on the subject, or when they are so broadly expressed as to convey an erroneous view. As employed by Macaulay, they are guarded from both evils. He never employs them vaguely, from a mere love of balancing sentences ; and he never fails so to limit them as to remove all danger of their carrying the reader too far. They are useful as stimulants. By the powerful flow of his narrative, readers are apt to be borne along unthinkingly. An antithesis occasionally introduced, breaks the fascina-

tion, and rouses the attention which had been charmed into luxurious rest. They are in him what uncouth phraseologies and strange constructions are to Carlyle. The use of them is undoubtedly an artifice ; but it is a very agreeable artifice, and can only mislead those who are determined to be misled in order to be censorious. But many, even among warm admirers, feel that the style is pitched in too high a key. Majestic as it is, it wants repose. The finest passages, they say, lose much from a want of relief. To a certain extent the objection is true. In varying beauty, Lord Macaulay's style is not equal to that of Mr. Froude, while it is far short of the magic with which Mr. Newman's language rises and falls, seemingly without effort, as if in unavoidable harmony with the changing theme. But in this Mr. Newman is, so far as we know, absolutely unrivalled ; and Mr. Froude has followed, though at a distance, the steps of the master. Like the goblin page in the Minstrel's Lay, he has had one hasty glance into the mystic book, and learned some imperfect knowledge of the spell. On the other hand, if we compare Macaulay with Gibbon, the result is different. A volume of Gibbon positively fatigues the reader ; while it would take a good many volumes of Macaulay to communicate any feeling of weariness. In this particular, Macaulay is to Gibbon as Thucydides is to Tacitus. The historian of Greece, and the historian of England, are perhaps deficient in the art of telling a simple story in simple words ; but both have far more of this art than the historian of the Empire, or the historian of the Decline and Fall.

Beyond doubt, one of the greatest merits of Lord Macaulay's style was its clearness. It has all the lucidity of Paley, with a brilliancy which Paley never reached. He can give expression to exact thinking,

or conduct subtle argument in a manner as easy to follow as the simplest narrative. In his disquisition on the nature of the Papacy in the Review of Ranke, in his refutation of Mr. Gladstone's Church and State crotchets, and in the papers on the Utilitarian Theory, there is not a sentence hard to be understood. Some very profound people object to this, but we confess to a weakness for comprehending what we read. There is a great distinction between thought and the expression of thought. It is not desirable that the thought should always be obvious and easy, but it is impossible that the expression of it can be too clear. There must be no obscurity in the medium. The matter of the sentence may be difficult, but that is no reason why the form should be slovenly. No one, we suppose, would call Berkeley a shallow thinker ; and yet no thinker ever conveyed his thoughts more distinctly to his readers. When any writer's language becomes cloudy, the reason simply is, that the ideas of which it is the vehicle are vague. To attain this clearness, Lord Macaulay does not discard ornament and content himself with inelegant simplicity. On the contrary, "brilliant" is the epithet which rises to the lips of every one in speaking of his style. He presents a curious contrast to the historian of the middle ages. His lucid narrative contrasts with Mr. Hallam's trick of hinting at a fact, of implying what he should have clearly told ; his eloquence contrasts with Mr. Hallam's abrupt and austere judgments ; his fervour contrasts with Mr. Hallam's total want of enthusiasm. In a question of popularity, he is to Mr. Hallam what Mr. Hallam is to Brady or Carte. His writings cannot fail to recall the common remark that history is like oratory. That poetic faculty which is the highest reach of the imagination he wanted. Even the vigorous and stirring "Lays"

do not establish a claim to rank as a poet. But the imagination of the orator—a thing quite distinct from the knack of the debater, and which may be manifested in writing as well as in speaking—was his in large measure.

A like power, and a greater deficiency, may be remarked in Mr. Gladstone. That gentleman's want of poetic feeling, indeed, is so extreme as to excite astonishment. It seems impossible in any man of ordinary cultivation. Macaulay, on the other hand, approached the heights of poetry. *He* could never have written those volumes in which Homer is almost made prosaic, could never have compared Athené to the electric telegraph. But the oratorical fervour of the great speaker often reminds us of the oratorical fervour of the great writer. No man ever possessed to a greater degree than Lord Macaulay the real secret of an orator,—the power to enter into, and to arouse at will, the emotions which sway masses of mankind. Rhetorical, in the proper sense of the word, he was not. The distinction is not easy to give exactly; but perhaps we may find it in this, that the strength of the orator lies in power and sincerity; while the rhetorician is an artist only, bent on temporary success, with or without convictions, as the case may be. By the former spirit Macaulay was always actuated; to the latter he was always a stranger. Some wonderful critics have indeed declared, that, wanting heart himself, he never reached the hearts of others—that he coloured his characters from a mere love of effective contrasts, heedless of the truth of his portraits. Astonished silence is the only answer to such criticism as this. The heart of the man, even in the cool judgment of Mr. Thackeray, beats in every sentence he has written. He is persuaded, some may think too firmly persuaded, of

the rectitude of his views. His strong beliefs, and his warm, almost passionate expression of them, have done not a little towards his unparalleled popularity. It is by the power of his enthusiasm alone that he rises almost into the regions of poetry when he tells of Cromwell's charge at Naseby, or the fury of the Huguenots, who followed the white plume at Ivry.

We have already compared Macaulay to Thucydides. He resembles the Greek in yet another point—his knowledge of what he somewhere calls the laws of historical perspective. No historian can be exhaustive. He cannot tell the whole truth,—he must content himself with conveying an impression of it. "The perfect historian," says the essay on History, "is he in whose work the character and spirit of an age is exhibited in miniature." But to accomplish this requires the utmost discretion in selecting leading points, and in rejecting what is incidental. Thucydides had this gift in perfection, and Macaulay does not fall short of him. Both writers are sometimes minute, and sometimes general. Many things they narrate in the fullest detail, for many others a cursory notice is sufficient; yet they are never prolix, and never jejune. It is this power, together with a faculty of orderly arrangement, which makes Lord Macaulay's narrative take such a hold on the mind. His changes of scene are managed with such method, that we are never confused; and he assigns to each part so exactly its due share of consideration, that we cannot fail to apprehend distinctly the proportions of the whole. All the innumerable touches which give reality never bewilder, never obscure the clearness and consecutiveness of the record.

An historian, to be really great, must possess some of the qualities of a great dramatist. The highest condition of genius—the creative faculty—may be want-

ing. But although he need not create, he must be endowed with that secondary power of the imagination which disposes and arranges existing materials so as to animate them with life. "It would be a great thing," wrote Niebuhr, "if I could make the Romans stand before my readers, distinct, intelligible, familiar as contemporaries, living and moving." What Niebuhr longed to do, Macaulay has been able to accomplish. His characters live and move before us. His earliest writings show a constant endeavour to realise and to represent the scenes and the actors of other times. In the fragment of a Roman tale, and the dialogue between Milton and Cowley, we have the first glimpses of that power which drew the vivid picture of the "club" in the essay on Johnson, and which has given to these four volumes of history an interest surpassing all but the most perfect triumphs of dramatic art. Not a few worthy people, indeed, regard this interest with a vague alarm. They consider it, as Plato long ago considered the poet, "as something sweet, and wonderful, and divine;" but they accord it no hearty welcome; they had rather crown it with a crown of doubtful honour, and send it away into another country. They don't understand how a history can be as entertaining as a novel. The phenomenon is strange: it frightens them; and, not without some irritation, they reject it as an imposture. In their judgment, the historian, like the philosopher, must have "the dry light, unmingled with any tincture of the affections." He must be a passionless machine, and his production must have the unexciting merits of an almanac. As, in social intercourse, many persons get credit for sincerity by being disagreeable, so, according to this canon, history must win a reputation for trustworthiness by being dull. It is impossible to convince any who hold this belief—

whose requisition from an historian is, *surtout point de zèle*. We can only wonder at the peculiarity of their taste, and leave them, without argument, to their preference of the frigid virtues of Rollin over characters drawn with the accuracy of Clarendon, and sustained with a force and consistency not unworthy of Scott. In this respect Macaulay has rivalled Tacitus. The portrait of William is deserving to be placed beside the portrait of Tiberius. These historians possessed the power of giving individuality to their characters in a manner only surpassed by the greatest masters of fiction.

It has been urged with more plausibility, that this attraction is obtained by violations of human nature,—that, in order to secure it, contrasts are worked out with a sharpness which results in the delineations not of possible human beings, but of grotesque and unnatural monsters. It is difficult to determine what inconsistencies in men's characters transcend belief. Sir Walter Scott has been accused of exceeding probability in his attempt to reproduce in Buckingham the original of Zimri. But has Macaulay exceeded it in the instances most commonly brought against him—Bacon and Marlborough? The grounds of the charge are curious. Because Marlborough married a woman without money, therefore he was not avaricious; because he always loved his wife, therefore he was not cold-hearted. As if conflict of passions was a thing unknown; as if calm and unimpassionable natures were not the chosen abiding-places of one enduring emotion. Again, because a knot of young gentlemen at Cambridge, little exposed to the seductions of place and power, have found intellectual culture strengthen their unassailed virtue, therefore Bacon, in his eager quest after the world's prizes, could not have deserted Essex or fawned on Buckingham. As

if the long history of human frailty had never been written,—as if temptation had never lured men from rectitude,—as if intellect had never stooped to sin.

Such criticism refuses to see any incongruities, will not allow of their existence. It prefers writers like the later classical historians, whose characters are impersonations of the virtues and the vices, acting always after their kind. It argues after the fashion of the gentle Cowper, who never would believe that Hastings had hanged Nuncomar, because Hastings had been a good-natured boy at Westminster. But, in truth, it is founded on a total mistake. We cannot arrive, as it were, at the centres of men's dispositions, from which all their thoughts and actions will radiate naturally. Characters are not circles. It is not thus that the great masters have portrayed human nature. Shakespeare's men and women do not act in unvarying obedience to any ruling passion; they abound in inconsistencies, such as the existence of a love for Ophelia in the heart of the depraved and guilty Queen. If this be true in the world of fiction, it is much more true in the world of reality. For the best artists obey a canon of propriety which forbids them to run into extremes. Inconsistencies and incongruities they indeed give us; but lest they shock by a too great improbability, they soften what they know to exist. They wisely avoid what is so extraordinary as to seem unnatural, though they may be persuaded of its truth, as the discreet painter does not seek to represent startling and uncommon effects of sea or sky, even such as he may have himself beheld. No such privilege is accorded to the historian. He may not select or tone down. He is but a copyist, and must represent faithfully whatever nature brings before him. It is not his business to make nature natural—to reconcile what is with our ideas of what

ought to be. Hence his representations are often strange and inexplicable. After all that has been written, even by such a thinker as Carlyle, can any one say that he comprehends men like Mahomet or Cromwell? The inconsistencies and contradictions of their lives lie before us; but we cannot, save by an arbitrary exercise of fancy, ascribe them to a common origin. They are to us enigmas; probably they were enigmas to themselves. To go no further than the pages before us, can anything be conceived more unaccountable than the proceedings of Rochester in the intrigue which dismissed Catherine Sedley from the palace? We have a statesman who, in addition to the vices of drinking and swearing, approves himself an adept in the part of a procurer, and who employs the agency of his own wife in order to divert the jealousy of the Queen in the direction of an innocent lady. Yet this very man, in the midst of such an intrigue, retires to his closet and composes a religious meditation so fervent and so devout that it would not have misbecome the lips of Ken. Hypocrisy cannot be imputed, for his prayers and his penitence were offered up in secret, and were known to no man till the grave had closed over him for more than a century. The historian may well add, "So much is history stranger than fiction; and so true it is, that nature has caprices which art dares not imitate." Attempts to explain such things are vain. Man's analysis, like the syllogism, is all unequal to the subtlety of nature.

A strong dramatic tendency has one danger,—it leads to exaggeration. The persons of the drama are so grouped, their actions are so narrated, their expressions so introduced, as to bring out peculiarities in the strongest light. Great as is the attraction bestowed by this style of writing, it may give to some

traits of character an undue prominence over others. Yet it may be doubted whether this leads to essential error. The misrepresentation is in form rather than in fact. Macaulay has supplied a half-defence of the method in his essay on Machiavelli: "The best portraits," he says, "are perhaps those in which there is a slight mixture of caricature; and we are not certain that the best histories are not those in which a little of the exaggeration of fictitious narrative is judiciously employed. Something is lost in accuracy; but much is gained in effect. The fainter lines are neglected; but the great characteristic features are imprinted on the mind for ever." The theory is rather a dangerous one, but we suspect it is right in the main. Attention is arrested by art in disposition, fertility of illustration, and force of language. Taken literally, these may express more than the real state of matters, but a slight effort of reason will make the truth apparent. The question of accuracy, however, has been already discussed. We would only now ask those who complain of Macaulay's deceptive art this one question: Have they themselves been ever really misled by it, or have they represented it as misleading merely because such a charge seemed a plausible objection to an historian whose principles they disliked? If the charm employed has been in truth so potent and so subtle, it is somewhat odd that so many should have escaped its action. As to the question of effect there can be no dispute. We know his characters, as we know the men and women with whom we live. Danby, Halifax, Shaftesbury, Marlborough, William, can never be forgotten. The features of even his secondary personages are "impressed on the mind for ever."

If, going beyond the four volumes of the History, we take the series of Historical Essays into considera-

tion, we shall find ourselves justified in calling Lord Macaulay an historian of England in a very wide sense. Of the feudal days, indeed, he tells us little; but in his half-dozen essays he has so illustrated critical periods of our history as to convey general views of surprising accuracy. Any diligent student of those papers, and of the History, will have no slight acquaintance with at least the later acts of that great drama, the growth of the English Constitution. He will be able to give no superficial answer to the question, What has made England what England is? how comes it that her destinies have been so immeasurably happier than those of nations whose political condition she at no very distant date nearly resembled? how has it been her lot alone to "combine, beyond all example and all hope, the blessings of liberty with the blessings of order," escaping monarchical tyranny on the one hand, and the not less oppressive tyranny of democracy on the other? Such an inquiry must be interesting to students of all countries, and assuredly none can be more worthy the attention of Englishmen. There are many now-a-days who, imagining themselves wiser than their neighbours, deem such matters of small account, and look down on them as surface questions. To such shallow thinkers the invigorating influences of an honest patriotism must be ever unknown. They affect to despise the noble science of politics; they merely show that they cannot understand it. If they would use their eyes and look on what the nations are even now enduring all around them, they might learn to appreciate more justly what we owe to the founders of English liberty. "Laws themselves," says Carlyle truly enough, "political institutions, are not our life; but only the house in which our life is led; nay, but the bare walls of the house." Yet surely the house is

somewhat ; and we do well to take good heed that the walls be strong. If the tenement is insecure, the life which it shelters will be uncertain and full of danger. A free constitution is not valuable for itself alone, but for the security, the peace, the justice, and the individual happiness which only a free constitution can guarantee ; and for the knowledge, the industry, and the elegant cultivation which a free constitution can best foster. To learn how this priceless possession has been acquired, is the surest way to learn how it may be preserved. "To us," says the historian, "nothing is so interesting and delightful as to contemplate the steps by which the England of the Domesday Book, the England of the Curfew and the Forest laws, the England of crusaders, monks, schoolmen, astrologers, serfs, outlaws, became the England which we know and love, the classic ground of liberty and philosophy, the school of all knowledge, the mart of all trade. . . . The history of England is the history of this great change in the moral, intellectual, and physical state of the inhabitants of our own island." We never could understand how the author who could thus feel and thus write should have been so bitterly disliked by Conservatives. Surely no history, as a whole, was ever conceived in a more truly Conservative spirit. We would put Macaulay into the hands of every one whom we desired to educate in a healthy pride of race. No writer ever taught more plainly that important though hard lesson, the rational and equitable relation of the various classes of society towards each other ; ever inculcated more strongly an intelligent love of country, an enlightened understanding of the political privileges we enjoy. No man ever obeyed better the injunction of the poet—

"Love thou thy land with love far brought
From out the storied past."

“He loved England as an Athenian loved the city of the violet crown, as a Roman loved the city of the seven hills.” He seems to cherish the devotion of a soldier for the emblem of his country’s greatness—

“The glorious SEMPER EADEM; the banner of our pride.”

His heart is stirred when he but alludes to the grand or pathetic scenes in English story—Elizabeth at Tilbury, the agony and relief of Derry; the dying prayer of Sidney, Russell’s last parting from his wife; and we, do not we thrill with a proud emotion as we read? If Englishmen would have their patriotism deeply rooted; if they would be made assured that the history of their own land is rich in nobler associations, and bright with the light of purer virtue, than the vaunted records of Greece or Rome; if they would learn reverence for the laws which have been handed down, would acquire firmness to preserve, or “patient force” to change them, let them study every fragment which has been left by the most fervent annalist of England. And, as he gloried in his country’s past, so he was pleased with her present, and hopeful of her future. The tendency of our popular writers is rather the other way. There are among us many prophets of evil, of whom the foremost is Mr. Carlyle. To him, as to Heinrich Heine, “everything seems pushed uneven.” His eyes are sick for the sight which they see. When he looks abroad, he beholds not a prosperous and happy nation, but everywhere folly, mammon-worship, and misery—an aristocracy which cannot lead, a grubbing middle-class, a depressed and degraded people under all. Lesser lights cant like their leader, though in feebler tones.

In a late number of “Macmillan’s Magazine,” Mr. Maurice tells his readers to discard the cheerfulness of

Macaulay, exhorting them "not to affect content with all around them, for they feel discontent." Surely this is to be sad from mere wantonness. It is true, of course, that

" We look before and after,
And pine for what is not."

But is this more true of us than it would have been of all generations of men who have passed away, than it will be of all generations of men who are to come? The admonition to "clear the mind of cant" might be well retorted. A close companion to this mourning over the present is a habit of triumphing in some fancied past, which the "Times" has happily called "the high-flying style of writing history." Certain writers have a favourite period during which all men were of a loftier stature than common, or, to use the approved expression, "walked in the light of an idea." Spanish galleons were plundered only from hatred of the Spanish religion; Elizabeth was approached with a servility and adulation which would have revolted Louis XIV., solely because she was the bulwark of the Protestant faith; and, accordingly, the pious sailors and courtiers are duly exalted above the men of our degenerate days. Lord Macaulay has avoided these kindred errors. He can appreciate past times without disparaging his own. He can reverence Hampden and Somers without sneering at Fox or Grey; he does not see that the nobles who deserted Caroline of Brunswick at the bidding of George IV. were more servile than the nobles who found Anne Boleyn guilty, and who voted for cutting off Cromwell's head without a trial, at the bidding of Henry; nor can he understand how men who were half-way between Protestant and Papist under Henry, good Catholics under Mary, and good Protestants under Elizabeth,

were more actuated by zeal for religion than a generation which has sent missionaries over all the world, and which has raised self-supporting churches in greater numbers than the numbers of the Establishment. Thinking thus of his own day, he contemplated the future with a rational hope. He had passed through times which were not always times of pleasantness; he had shared in struggles which were no child's play; yet he never lost faith in the destinies of England. He has told us the grounds of this faith in his noble address at Glasgow: "Ever since I began to make observations on the state of my country, I have been seeing nothing but growth, and hearing of nothing but decay." In the annals of England he read a long story of advance and improvement, and he never discovered any reason to believe that the advance would be soon arrested,—that the improvement would speedily cease. The New Zealander may come at last; but his celebrated sketch will not be taken at an early date. We prefer, we own, the hopeful creed. Indeed, we confess to regarding with peculiar aversion these unexplained denunciations of our present condition. They owe, too frequently, their warmth, if not their origin, to an agreeable feeling in the mind of the denunciator, that his deeper insight proves him wiser and better than his fellows. They can do no possible good, for they are never so definite as to instruct. If we must rail at the world, let us do so, with Jacques, in good set terms—in language which can be understood. Till these dwellers in gloom tell us distinctly what is wrong and how to mend it, we shall take leave to consider cheerful confidence quite as rational as vague alarm, and a great deal more pleasant.

As a writer of history, Lord Macaulay possessed a great advantage in the fact that he had lived history.

Familiarity with the conduct of affairs imparts a great power in the narration of them. Macaulay, indeed, never scaled the topmost heights of Olympus ; and it is sad to think that the claims of a second-rate Cabinet office should have hindered the completion of the work of his life. But, though we may regret the years devoted to such duties as the duties of Paymaster of the Forces, we cannot regret any time spent in Parliament, or in intercourse with leading statesmen. The greatest historians of antiquity were conversant with the political world. The most brilliant historians of France owe much of their attractiveness to the same cause. The want of this advantage gives a deadness to the most profound historians of Germany. Gibbon tells us that the "eight years he sat in Parliament were a school of civil prudence, the first and most essential virtue of an historian." In the fragments of Fox and Sir James Mackintosh, questions of state policy are handled with an ease and freedom for which we look vainly in the pages of Lingard or Hume. Mr. Grote's unsuccessful endeavours to bestow the ballot on the people of England brought him a valuable if indirect return when he came to discuss the reforms of Cleisthenes. It is not good that men who aspire to treat themes of great concernment should live apart from the spheres in which such themes are agitated, estranged within a little circle of admirers. Some acquaintance with public life might have shaken Mr. Carlyle's preference for despotic rule ; a little experience in drawing up statutes might have disturbed Mr. Froude's belief in the value of preambles as historical authorities.

It is worthy of remark how little Lord Macaulay's opinions varied throughout life. Even his judgments of character remained unaltered. The Bunyan and the Johnson of 1830 reappear without change in the

Encyclopædia Essays of 1854-56. On disputed points of English history, on great questions of government, the same uniformity is preserved. As youth did not hurry him into extremes, so age did not frighten him into reaction. In the dialogue between Milton and Cowley we have the same estimate of the Great Rebellion, and the actors in it, as in the introductory chapter of the History. The solution of the franchise difficulty proposed in the review of Mitford's Greece is maintained in the articles on the Utilitarian Controversy, and was expressed at the very last in the celebrated letter on the character of Jefferson. Nor can it be said that his opinions, though formed early, show any traces of being formed hastily. The right of the people to the franchise has of late been much debated; but we have improved nothing upon the doctrine, that the government of a community should be intrusted only to the educated and enlightened portion of it. From that doctrine may our statesmen never swerve, either from a restless craving for self-advancement, or from an abject deference to the passions of the crowd. That great party to which Macaulay on his entrance into life elected to belong, commanded his adherence till the close. If there be any prudence in moderation, if there be any wisdom in timely reform, if veneration for the past has any beauty, if a true understanding of the present affords any safety, if, in a word, there be any glory in Whiggery, Macaulay was the man to set it forth. His historical mind was naturally attached to that political creed which alone can trace its historical development, which alone can boast great historical associations. He was, in the best sense of the word, a thorough party-man. He understood, what now-a-days so few appear to understand, that a member of a representative body must often yield on some point

to the opinions of the majority of those with whom he generally agrees, if government is to be carried on at all. He never consented to sacrifice what he considered a vital question ; but, on the other hand, he knew that capricious isolation is not statesmanship. His life was a protest, and his writings abound in warnings against that vain love of independent action which afflicts a country with a succession of feeble administrations, and which brings about a state of confusion and weakness such as no lover of representative institutions can contemplate without anxiety. He was the last of a long series of eminent Englishmen, including such names as the names of Addison, Burke, and Mackintosh, whose allegiance has been the chiefest honour of the Whig party, who have served their country in public life, but have rendered to their country, and to mankind, services far more valuable and more enduring by the labours of their retirement.

It has been often remarked that no great power of humour, or play of irony, can be discovered in Macaulay's writings. His wit, on the other hand, is brilliant ; and of the sarcastic tone he was a master. There is considerable fun in the remarks on Dr. Nares' Life of Burleigh, and in the allusions to "the Sweet Queen" in the article on Madame D'Arblay. The reviews of Montgomery's Poems, and of Croker's edition of Johnson, could hardly have been more biting ; and for a combination of sarcasm and crushing invective, we hardly know where the Sketch of Barère can find a parallel. But he was not a humorist. On this subject a great deal of cant is talked now-a-days. "A man's humour," says the author of "Friends in Council," "is the deepest part of his nature." This saying, like most sayings which strive to be very fine, may be true or false according as it is

explained. If it mean that the humour of a character shows much of the real nature of that character,—that a universal play of “any man in his own humour” would tell us not a little of men’s dispositions, then it may be true. But if it mean that a man of humours is a deeper or a clearer thinker than a man without them, then we suspect it is false. A humorist sees, perhaps, more than other people, but he does not see with greater distinctness or greater truth. Humour is like the ointment of the dervise in the Eastern tale: if partially applied, it reveals many hidden treasures; but if it cover both eyes, the whole mental vision is darkened. Men ardent in the search of truth are impatient of its whims and vagaries. With regard to irony the case is much the same. As an intellectual art, irony is a sort of yielding in order to gain at last,—valuable as a weapon of controversy, of no avail in the discovery of truth. Even as wielded by its greatest master, it affords a victory over an opponent, but it does not advance an investigation. In those dialogues in which Socrates employs it most, nothing strikes the reader so forcibly as the reflection that no progress is ever made. And it is precisely when Socrates desires to make progress, to teach something real, to inculcate some great lesson, that the ironical tone disappears. It then gives place to earnest reasonings, or to the sublimity of his gorgeous myths. As a habit of the moral nature, irony is even more questionable. It is often an affectation; and even when unconscious and sincere, it repels the generality. Plain men regard it as an impertinence; zealous men regard it as an unwarrantable concealment, or as a cowardly reluctance to meet questions fairly. For an historian especially, in whom simplicity of view is essential, humour and irony alike are dangerous and misleading gifts. They may impart a charm, but it is

a charm which will lure astray. An ingenious critic in the "Saturday Review" has summed up Lord Macaulay's imperfections by saying, that he wanted "the fitful, reserved, and haughty temperament which characterises the highest order of genius." A more absurd sentence was never written. Every one of the qualities here so placidly ascribed to the highest natures is a weakness. Fitfulness marks a want of strength and a want of balance; reserve arises from a fear lest frankness should betray deficiencies; and haughtiness is a sign simply of a very unamiable feeling of superiority to others, often cherished by merely clever men, but to which genius is uniformly a stranger. We can readily believe that these unpleasant qualities characterise the highest as well as the lowest order of Saturday Reviewers; but we shall be slow to think that they existed in "my gentle Shakespeare," or that they marred the manliness of Sir Walter Scott. They are to be found only in second-rate men who wish to be esteemed geniuses, and when so found, are very heartily and very justly disliked by all mortals.

Some historians, aware that great things have been done in their own day, write of what they have seen and known. Among the historians of the past, some write because they are possessed by an idea which they long to enforce, as Hume by his love for the Stuarts, Thierry by his theories of race. Others, again, conscious of literary power, devote that power to history because history is a popular study, and elect to write of a period because that period seems picturesque, to celebrate a character because that character seems imposing. Possibly the period they determine upon may be unsuited to their powers; the character they would exalt may be unworthy; but their choice is made, and by that choice they

must abide. Possibly experience may show that they have no aptitude for historical investigation, no faculty of discerning character, no power of weighing evidence; but the discovery comes too late, and these defects are supplied by wayward opinions and arbitrary judgments. To such an origin we may, without unfairness, ascribe the "historic fancies" of Mr. Carlyle and Mr. Froude. But the true historian of past times is he who selects some epoch because long familiarity has made that epoch present to him as his own. He does not read that he may write; he writes because he has read. So only will he be able to rival the excellencies of an historian who writes of his own times. Study will have given almost as intimate an acquaintance with his subject; and his narrative will therefore be almost as vivid and as truthful. It was in this way that knowledge forced authorship on Gibbon. He had been long conversant with his great theme before. "At Rome, on the 15th of October 1764, as I sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while the barefooted friars were singing vespers in the Temple of Jupiter, the idea of writing the decline and fall of the city first started to my mind." So too the history of England was no novel subject to Macaulay. It had been his favourite study from boyhood. The torment devised for him by Sydney Smith was, that he should constantly hear people making false statements about the reign of Queen Anne, without being able to set them right. Much as he knew about many things, he knew most, and cared most, about the annals of his country. We may learn some day when the idea of writing them first took possession of his mind. Unhappily, though we may have a companion to the scene at Rome, we shall never have a companion to that passage in which Gibbon describes a yet happier moment of his life,

when, "on the day, or rather night, of the 27th of June 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve, I wrote the last lines of the last page in a summer-house in my garden." The "establishment of fame" has been indeed accomplished even by the fragment; but we have had a painful illustration of the truth of the reflection which spread "a sober melancholy" over the mind of Gibbon—the reflection that "whatsoever might be the future fate of the history, the life of the historian must be short and precarious."

In spite of the incompleteness of his work, the name of Macaulay will have no lowly place even in the long roll of English worthies. His labours in literature have done more to spread abroad a true understanding of English history than those of any English writer, and his conduct in political life need not fear comparison with the most upright of English statesmen. It is perhaps too much to hope that another such historian will appear to tell of the past greatness of England; but we may surely entertain the expectation, that the men to whom England's future may be confided in times of trouble will have something of the masculine sense, the lofty love of truth, the unswerving adherence to principle, which ennobled the nature of Lord Macaulay.

HISTORY OF FREDERIC THE GREAT.¹

MR. CARLYLE'S "History of the French Revolution," published twenty-eight years ago, ended with the following passage :—

"And so here, O reader, has the time come for us two to part. Toilsome was our journeying together; not without offence; but it is done. To me thou wert as a beloved shade, the disembodied or not yet embodied spirit of a Brother. To thee I was but as a Voice. Yet was our relation a kind of sacred one; doubt not that! For whatsoever once sacred things become hollow jargons, yet while the voice of man speaks with man, hast thou not there the living fountain out of which all sacrednesses sprang, and will yet spring? Man, by the nature of him, is definable 'as an incarnated word.' Ill stands it with me if I have spoken falsely: thine also it was to hear truly. Farewell."

The "History of Frederic" closes with a very different leave-taking :—

"I define him to myself as hitherto the Last of the Kings;—when the Next will be, is a very long question! But it seems to me as if Nations, probably all Nations, by and by, in their despair,—blinded, swallowed like Jonah, in such a whale's-belly of things brutish, waste, abominable (for is not Anarchy, or the Rule of what is Baser over what is Nobler, the one life's-misery worth complaining of, and, in fact, the

¹ "History of Friedrich II. of Prussia, called Frederick the Great." By Thomas Carlyle. 6 vols. London: Chapman and Hall. 1864.—[Reprinted from the "North British Review," No. 85. September 1865.]

abomination of abominations, springing from and producing all others whatsoever?)—as if the Nations universally, and England too if it hold on, may more and more bethink themselves of such a Man and his Function and Performance, with feelings far other than are possible at present. Meanwhile, all I had to say of him is finished : that too, it seems, was a bit of work appointed to be done. Adieu, good readers ; bad, also, adieu."

In the tone and spirit of these two passages we seem to discern clear marks of a change which has taken place in Mr. Carlyle ; a change not for the better. He has grown hardened in self-confidence ; a grim yet not unkindly humour has given place to savage intolerance ; the deep and warm sympathies which ever and again relieved his sternest moods of indignation have sunk out of sight, and there remains a cheerless uniformity of harshness and contempt,—forgotten only when some of the strange favourites of his wayward fancy step upon the scene. It is hardly too much to say that he appears to have lost what was once his leading characteristic—a genuine insight into what is really noble in human action, and exalted in human character.

Worst of all is that, in the theme Mr. Carlyle has here chosen, these unhappy tendencies will have peculiar power to work mischief. Except religion, there is no subject on which the people of this country think so much as politics ; and it is a subject on which, fortunately for them, though greatly to Mr. Carlyle's disgust, their thoughts can be carried out into action. It is plainly, then, a matter of no small moment that they should think rightly on political questions ; and Mr. Carlyle has here done all in his power to make them think wrongly. In his life of Sterling he treated the religious beliefs of his countrymen in a manner that even a critic so favourable as

Mr. Brimley was forced to condemn as "wholly unjustifiable;" and now he is doing all he can to upset their political creed. We shall hardly be suspected of affectation when we say that to mark Mr. Carlyle's errors is not a grateful task. It is difficult to do so without misgiving; it is impossible to do so without regret; it is hopeless to do so without incurring the charge of presumption. Yet Mr. Carlyle is not a writer whose errors, if they be such, should be passed in silence. A man of genius preaching a morality at once pretentious and unsound, is the most dangerous of all teachers. And he is never more dangerous than when he teaches by means of history. Such diatribes as the "Latter-Day Pamphlets" carried with them their own refutation. The subjects were familiar, and the fallacies were therefore powerless. But it is a very different matter when an unrivalled knowledge of a past time is devoted to the work of setting the present in a false light. And this is what Mr. Carlyle has done. He is never weary of driving home the moral of his tale, which is simply the manifold inferiority of his own country and time. Now it is no light thing that historical facts should be distorted in order that false opinions may be inculcated; that some chosen period or some favourite hero should be painted in colours unduly bright, in order that the days we live in may appear more gloomy, and the men who rule us more incapable; in a word, that erroneous convictions should be fostered and groundless discontent awakened. Mr. Carlyle, in "Past and Present," sketched a lordly abbot of the middle ages, whose munificence might contrast with the cold charities of the nineteenth century; he now brings Frederic before us in beautiful and commanding proportions, which may dwarf into insignificance the puny rulers of the present day. In both instances the

representations are unreal and the contrast misleading; nor would it be a useless service to convince any reader that the morality in which he has been taught to believe is not a dream, that the age in which he is fated to live is not corrupt and effete, that the country to which he belongs is not utterly degraded or hopelessly ruined.

We do not propose, in these pages, to give any continuous sketch of the events of Frederic's life. That has been already done by many reviewers, and the book itself has been widely read, at least those parts of it which bear directly on Frederic's career. Our concern is rather with Mr. Carlyle than with his hero; more with the causes and the political results of Frederic's wars than with the details of the wars themselves. For, as it seems to us, the great interest of this book lies in the fact that it is the final and complete development of Mr. Carlyle's views,—the latest exposition of the doctrine of hero-worship. What manner of man then is the chosen hero, according to this doctrine in its perfection? To what form of government does it lead us? And what effects does it tend to produce on the history of a nation? If we can catch any glimpse of a satisfactory answer to these questions, we may be able to appreciate the political value of the doctrine itself.

Beyond doubt, Mr. Carlyle has chosen a theme well suited to a full and clear illustration of his theory, both as regards the character of his hero, and of the period in which he lived. The eighteenth century Mr. Carlyle knows thoroughly, and does not in the least admire. It is, in his eyes, "a disastrous, wrecked inanity, not useful to dwell upon." It was "opulent in accumulated falsities," had, indeed, grown so false as to have lost the consciousness of being false, was "steeped in falsity, and impregnated with it to the

very bone." Some critics have resented such sweeping condemnation, and have stood up for this so much abused century. They maintain that it must have had something good in it, because much good came after it; and then they run over the great names of which it can boast in literature, statesmanship, and war; and ask if a tree altogether bad could bring forth such fruit? Neither argument is very conclusive. The former is an old and well-worn fallacy, *post hoc ergo propter hoc*; and as for the latter, it proves nothing at all. The truth is that, as Mr. Carlyle puts it, during the eighteenth century, and especially the latter part of it, the whole fabric of society was unsound and decaying. Many of the men whose names are quoted as the ornaments of the time gained their greatest fame by their efforts to pull that fabric down. The ruling classes were not only corrupt, but were in a position utterly unreal, and impossible to be maintained. That they were blind to this, and went fiddling and dancing to destruction, illustrates more plainly than anything else what Mr. Carlyle calls "the falsity" of the time. Under them, indeed, influences were gathering, and forces were rising which they recked not of,—here to gain a calm success, there to burst forth in storm; but these things belong, not to the life of the eighteenth century, but to its destruction. No; the latter half of that century was artificial, unreal, undignified,—the only thing grand about it was the Revolution in which it closed. And it is precisely because of these characteristics that it forms a background against which heroism, or the semblance of it, stands out in strong relief.

Many points, too, in Frederic's character become almost heroic from contrast with the weakness and meanness of his epoch. He was eminently clear, direct, resolute, and largely endowed with "veracity," in the

Carlylian sense of the word ; that is, the faculty of seeing things as they really are, a faculty by no means to be confounded with the more vulgar virtue of telling the truth. On the other hand, his bad qualities bring out the doctrine of hero-worship in its full force. In judging of characters like Mahomet and Cromwell, whose thoughts were other than the thoughts of common men, we are easily led into a feeling of vague reverence, seeing much that we cannot comprehend, and would not hastily condemn. But Frederic's was no such mixed character. All his faults, his selfishness, his tyranny, his faithlessness, are quite apparent ; and therefore we say that Mr. Carlyle has at last chosen a hero whose character is well calculated to bring out the weakness as well as the strength of the gospel of hero-worship. Which of the two it brings out more completely we shall hereafter see.

Of the literary merits of the "Life of Frederic" widely different opinions will be entertained. Of course, like all the works of Mr. Carlyle, it bears unmistakeably the stamp of genius. Laborious research, no uncertain mark of genius, is apparent on every page. Certainly Mr. Carlyle does not hide this light under a bushel. He is for ever bewailing his mighty toils, as if he were another Hercules, and glorifying his persevering industry. On one point connected with Frederic's public life we should have liked greater fulness of detail,—we mean what Mr. Carlyle calls "hypothetic diplomatic stuff." We have several sketches, always wonderfully graphic, of diplomatic interviews ; but we sadly want definite accounts of the exact nature of the negotiations carried on, and of the treaties actually concluded. But Mr. Carlyle avoids these things, not from laziness, but from distaste. His soul abhors the intricacies of diplomacy, and he has little sympathy with those who do not

share this abhorrence. He directs divers sneers, not always in the best taste, against "ingenious Herr Professor Ranke," whose history of Frederic, we are told, "affords mankind a wondrously distilled '*astral spirit*,' a ghost-like facsimile (elegant grey ghost, with stars dim twinkling through) of Frederic's and other people's diplomatisings in this world." A man like Ranke deserved more respectful mention. His researches have thrown a light on Frederic's policy and career which we suspect Mr. Carlyle would have more highly appreciated, had it not been for the fact that the more this hero's diplomacy is investigated, and the more his treaties are studied, the less apparent will become the "moderation and veracity" ascribed to him by his English biographer. And while we are on this subject, we must say, once for all, that Mr. Carlyle expresses his contempt for the Prussian "Dryasdust,"—including in this borrowed phrase such men as Preuss and Ranke,—in terms which are quite unbecoming. The Prussian Dryasdust may be tedious, and much in want of an index, as well as of things more important; but surely he is laborious and accurate, and, so far as facts are concerned, makes rough places smooth for those who follow after him in a manner which deserves thankful acknowledgment rather than rude and scornful abuse. Even "ghost-like facsimiles" are something to have ready made to one's hand.

But if some students might desire fuller information regarding great treaties, none can wish for anything more regarding the fighting which is too often the result of treaties. All Frederic's battles are set forth with surprising lucidity, and in the most minute detail. Even without the accompanying plans, the careful reader can, from the verbal description, take in the lie of the ground, can comprehend the general

plan of the action, and can see how each formation and manœuvre bears upon that plan. Minute as Mr. Carlyle sometimes is, he never descends to the details which make Mr. Kinglake's battle of the Alma at once tedious, confused, and ridiculous. On the whole, so far as we can judge, he does not exhibit the power of seizing upon and vividly representing the essence, as it were, of an action which was possessed in so remarkable a degree by Sir William Napier; but some of his battle-pieces, as Prague, Dettingen, Fontenoy, seem to us not unworthy of the historian of the Peninsular war.

✓ We have said that Mr. Carlyle's research is visible on every page of his book. In no way is it more pleasantly visible than when he brings up from the great stores of his knowledge some lively anecdote or familiar allusion which serves to cheer the reader during his long, and sometimes weary journeying. We catch bright glimpses into the domestic life of the Prussian Princesses; bitterly sarcastic pictures of the follies of the French Court awake our scorn and laughter; grimly humorous, but yet indulgent sketches of the Court of St. Petersburg, in the days of Peter the Great, of *infâme* Catin, and of the more notorious Catherine II., excite we hardly know what various emotions, but among them certainly that of amusement. Some of these Court-scenes, for example such as illustrate the life and conversation of Peter the Great, or of Augustus the Strong, are hardly suited for quotation; but we cannot resist giving the following sketch of the great Czarina and her husband:—

“Catharine too had an intricate time of it under the Catin; which was consoled to her only by a tolerably rapid succession of lovers, the best the ground yielded. . . . In fine, there has been published, in these very years, a *Fragment* of early *Autobiography* by Catharine herself,—a credible and

highly remarkable little Piece ; worth all the others, if it is knowledge of Catharine you are seeking. A most placid, solid, substantial young Lady comes to light there ; dropped into such an element as might have driven most people mad. But it did not her ; it only made her wiser and wiser in her generation. Element black, hideous, dirty, as Lapland Sorcery ;—in which the first clear duty is to hold one's tongue well, and keep one's eyes open. Stars,—not very heavenly, but of fixed nature, and heavenly to Catharine,—a star or two, shine through the abominable murk : Steady, patient ; steer silently, in all weathers, towards these !

“ Young Catharine's immovable equanimity in this distracted environment strikes us very much. Peter is careering, tumbling about, on all manner of absurd broomsticks, driven too surely by the Devil ; terrific-absurd big Lapland Witch, surrounded by multitudes smaller, and some of them less ugly. Will be Czar of Russia, however ;—and is one's so-called Husband. These are prospects for an observant, immovably steady-going young Woman ! The reigning Czarina, old *Catin* herself, is silently the Olympian Jove to Catharine, who reveres her very much. Though articulately stupid as ever, in this Book of Catharine's she comes out with a dumb weight, of silence, of obstinacy, of intricate abrupt rigour, which—who knows but it may savour of dumb unconscious wisdom in the fat old blockhead ? The Book says little of her, and in the way of criticism, of praise, or of blame, nothing whatever ; but one gains the notion of some dark human female object, bigger than one had fancied it before.

“ Catharine steered towards her stars. Lovers were vouchsafed her, of a kind (her small stars, as we may call them) ; and, at length, through perilous intricacies, the big star, Autocracy of all the Russias,—through what horrors of intricacy, that last ! She had hoped always it would be by Husband Peter that she, with the deeper steady head, would be Autocrat : but the intricacies kept increasing, grew at last to the strangling pitch ; and it came to be, between Peter and her, ‘ Either you to Siberia (perhaps *farther*), or else I ! ’ And it was Peter that had to go ;—in what hideous way is well enough known ; no Siberia, no Holstein thought to be

far enough for Peter :—And Catharine, merely weeping a little for him, mounted to the Autocracy herself. And then, the big star of stars being once hers, she had, not in the lover kind alone, but in all uncelestial kinds, whole nebulae and milky-ways of small stars. A very Semiramis, or the Louis-Quatorze of those Northern Parts. ‘Second Creatress of Russia,’ second Peter the Great in a sense. To me none of the loveliest objects ; yet there are uglier, how infinitely uglier : object grandiose, if not great.”—Vol. vi. pp. 248-9.

The wretched Peter is disposed of in a few inimitable sentences—

“Peter is an abstruse creature ; has lived, all this while, with his Catharine an abstruse life, which would have gone altogether mad except for Catharine’s superior sense. An awkward, ardent, but helpless kind of Peter, with vehement desires, with a dash of wild magnanimity even : but in such an inextricable element, amid such darkness, such provocations of unmanageable opulence, such impediments, imaginary and real,—dreadfully real to poor Peter,—as made him the unique of mankind in his time. He ‘used to drill cats,’ it is said, and to do the maddest-looking things (in his late buried-alive condition) ;—and fell partly, never quite, which was wonderful, into drinking, as the solution of his inextricabilities. Poor Peter : always, and now more than ever, the cynosure of vulturous vulpine neighbours, withal ; which infinitely aggravated his otherwise bad case!”—Vol. vi. p. 256.

Bankrupt, chaotic, opulent in falsities, and above all, miserably wanting in the kingly element, as the eighteenth century undoubtedly was, there were yet a few statesmen and soldiers in Prussia, and even in other countries, whose occasional presence gives life and dignity to the record. Walpole and Fleury, unable to avert the coming evil, not brave enough to avoid the guilt of participating in a policy they disapproved by a voluntary relinquishment of power, are nevertheless forced to give place to more fiery spirits. Kaunitz, hailed in his own day as the greatest of

diplomatists, with his rides under glass cover, and his rash dinners on boiled capons—"a most high-sniffing, fantastic, slightly insolent shadow-king;" Belleisle, vain, unprincipled, blustering, yet likeable in a way, as the last of the grand old Frenchmen; "Fiery" Loudon, and "Cunctator" Daun; the two Keiths, "active" Prince Henry,—every man indeed of that stern band of warriors who surrounded Frederic—all these are brought before us living and moving, not a trait forgotten which can give individuality to the character. Even men long familiar to us we learn to know better than before: Chatham again lives to "bid England be of good cheer, and hurl defiance at her foes;" Wolfe, greatly daring, is borne by the midnight flow of the St. Lawrence to the scene of his glory and his death; Montcalm, prophetic as his end draws near, foretells the revolt of America and the humiliation of England.

But not only from Courts and armies does Mr. ✓ Carlyle gather that personal element which gives so much interest to his History. Many of the great names in literature light up the page, and cheer the reader, if but for a moment, with a pleasant effect of contrast. They are introduced for all sorts of reasons—often for no reason at all, but they are always welcome. Their only connection with the theme may be the time of their death, as Swift and Pope; they may have recorded some incident in the great struggle, as Smollett; like Maupertuis they may be laughed at, with Johnson they may receive a few words of hearty greeting; some come and go, pleasantly but without result, as Gellert or Zimmermann; a few leave behind them for ever the marks of the tread of the monarchs of thought, as Voltaire. Kings, statesmen, warriors, men of letters, pass in proud procession before us; types from every class in that strange society enliven

the scene ; and, as the stately panorama rolls on, the gazer looks with rapt attention on a brilliant and life-like picture of a bygone age, separated from us by a gulf broader and deeper than could have been the work of time alone. The historian of the great catastrophe which closed the eighteenth century, has in this book enabled any painstaking reader to form for himself some idea of what was the state of the nations which made that catastrophe inevitable.

✓ On the other hand, it is not to be denied that many and forcible objections can be urged against the "Life of Frederic" as a work of art. It is often prolix and often confused ; sins both of commission and of omission are numerous. Thus the first volume is concerned almost exclusively with the history of the Hohenzollerns—with the rise of Prussia into a nation and a royalty. This preamble, though undoubtedly too long, might have been made interesting had it been written in a clear and perspicuous style. But Mr. Carlyle's abruptness and obscurity, his trick of telling a story by allusion, and his preposterous habit of quotation from "Smelfungus," make it quite impossible for him to render an extensive sketch of this sort interesting or even intelligible to the general reader. The second volume is mainly occupied in the vain endeavour to make a hero out of that drunken savage Frederic William ; and though enriched with much of Mr. Carlyle's humour and genius, is, we must say, on the whole, wearisome. Volumes three, four, and five are the cream of the work ; for the end of the Seven Years' War, from the battle of Torgau to the Peace of Hubertsburg is very tedious, and the Bavarian war is unendurable. The redeeming points in the sixth volume are the account of the Partition of Poland, and, perhaps, the best index that was ever put together. As a whole, the book wants proportion. We

have too much of Frederic's ancestry, far too much of his father in particular; we have too much of his campaigns, and too little of his internal administration. Prolix, confused, out of proportion—all this, we regret to say, can be urged truly against the "Life of Frederic."

But all other literary faults sink into insignificance when we think of the style in which Mr. Carlyle has seen fit to write. Why in this respect he should have chosen so to fall away from his former self, it is hard to tell. It is quite melancholy to compare what he has done with what he chooses to do now. In his early days, Mr. Carlyle wrote English as few men have ever written it—simply and clearly, yet with a richness and power peculiarly his own. No reader will blame us for recalling to his recollection the following most pathetic passage from the "Diamond Necklace," published nearly thirty years ago:—

"Beautiful High-born that wert so foully hurled low! For, if thy Being came to thee out of old Hapsburg Dynasties, came it not also (like my own) out of Heaven? *Sunt lachrymæ rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt.* Oh, is there a man's heart that thinks, without pity, of those long months and years of slow-wasting ignominy;—of thy birth, soft-cradled in Imperial Schönbrunn, the winds of heaven not to visit thy face too roughly, thy foot to light on softness, thy eye on splendour; and then of thy death, or hundred deaths, to which the Guillotine and Fouquier Tinville's judgment-bar was but the merciful end? Look *there*, O man born of woman! The bloom of that fair face is wasted, the hair is grey with care; the brightness of those eyes is quenched, their lids hang drooping, the face is stony pale, as of one living in death. Mean weeds, which her own hand has mended, attire the Queen of the world. The death-hurdle, where thou sittest pale motionless, which only curses environ, has to stop: a people, drunk with vengeance, will drink it again in full draught, looking at thee there. Far as the eye reaches, a multitudinous sea of maniac heads;

the air deaf with their triumph-yell! The Living-dead must shudder with yet one other pang; her startled blood yet again suffuses with the hue of agony that pale face, which she hides with her hands. There is then *no* heart to say, God pity thee? O think not of these: think of HIM whom thou worshippest, the Crucified,—who also treading the wine-press *alone*, fronted sorrow still deeper; and triumphed over it, and made it holy; and built of it a ‘Sanctuary of Sorrow,’ for thee and all the wretched! Thy path of thorns is nigh ended. One long last look at the Tuileries, where thy step was once so light,—where thy children shall not dwell. The head is on the block; the axe rushes—dumb lies the world; that wild yelling world, and all its madness, is behind thee.”

To us this passage seems to fulfil all the conditions of good writing—the worthiest thoughts expressed in appropriate and moving words. Beside it Burke’s celebrated burst of eloquence on the same sad theme becomes tinsel; apart from the beauty of the diction, there is a tenderness of feeling which goes to the heart. Nothing of a similar stamp, or at all approaching to it, can be found throughout these six large volumes; the following, rather, is a fair specimen of Mr. Carlyle’s later style:—

“When the brains are out, things really ought to die;—no matter what lovely things they were, and still affect to be, the brains being out they actually ought in all cases to die, and with their best speed get buried. Men had noses at one time, and smelt the horror of a deceased reality fallen putrid, of a once dear verity become mendacious, phantasmal; but they have, to an immense degree, lost that organ since, and are now living comfortably cheek-by-jowl with lies. Lies of that sad ‘conservative’ kind, and indeed of all kinds whatsoever: for that kind is a general mother; and *breeds*, with a fecundity that is appalling, did you heed it much.”—Vol. iii. p. 337.

We cannot find it in our hearts to forgive this fall-

ing away in Mr. Carlyle. Such a rare and splendid gift was his, and to see how he has thrown it behind him ! And the worst is, that he has done this wilfully, with his eyes open. Affectation, a love of singularity, an idea that inverted sentences and uncouth phraseology would give weight to his teaching—such have been the causes of the corruption of Mr. Carlyle's style.

Not only has he thus deprived his readers of much pleasure ; not only has he done himself grievous injustice, he has also inflicted a deep, though not, we hope, a lasting injury, on the English language, than which no more grievous fault can be laid to the charge of a great author. A man like Mr. Carlyle should look on the language in which he writes as a proud heritage come down to him from no ignoble ancestry ; if not by him to be improved and enriched, at least to be preserved perfect and undefiled.

Besides this unhappy substitution of rant and fustian for real force of expression, Mr. Carlyle's tricks of composition have grown into vicious prominence. The old Smelfungus and Sauerteig device is repeated in these volumes until it becomes irksome to a degree ; his love of nicknames and sweeping terms of abuse has grown to an extreme. What possible good can come from raving against "boiling unveracities," "apes of the Dead Sea," "putrid fermentations of mud pools," and so on ? What does it all mean ? To what reader does it convey any distinct comprehensible idea ? Nay, these wild generalities have a directly pernicious effect. They may do Mr. Carlyle a good turn now and then in the way of finishing in convenient vagueness some terrible denunciation ; but they do this at the expense of clear thinking on his part and clear apprehension on the part of his readers. Nothing is more fallacious than the use of what Mr. Foster, in his essay on the

use of the word romantic, calls "exploding terms." They only serve the purpose of concealing obscurity or confusion of thought, and, in the hands of Mr. Carlyle, they serve this purpose many and many a time. Even worse, if possible, is Mr. Carlyle's fondness for nicknames, and the prominence he gives to physical peculiarities. It would be tedious to give instances—they are to be found on every page. In regard to the latter point, Mr. Carlyle seems to have taken a hint from Mr. Dickens. The peculiarities both in dress and appearance of many of his characters—of George II. for example—are as frequently insisted on and made as familiar to us as the coat-tails of Mr. Pickwick or the teeth of Mr. Carker.

Such tricks, besides being in bad taste, are positively misleading. Mr. Carlyle's admirers are fond of claiming for him the great merit of getting at the real nature of a man—of drawing his characters "from within outwards," to use their favourite way of putting it. The fact may be so ; but certainly the habit we refer to gives no very strong testimony that it is so. For in this way we get nothing but the outsides of people. They are identified by some external trait, and are ever after associated with it. Now, this trait may be the index to the real character of the man, but it also may not. We should like to have the character well analysed before the nickname is given, or the representative peculiarity fixed upon. The device is amusing and telling. A forcible impression is produced on the imagination ; but the question will intrude—is that impression true ? Are the pictures like the originals ? We feel ourselves too much at the mercy of the writer, and would welcome with a sense of security characters drawn in the old-fashioned style.

With a brief but vehement protest against the use

of German nomenclature by Mr. Carlyle,—at once unpleasing and puzzling, and, worst of all, not consistently kept up,—we pass from considering the book in its literary aspects.

Unfortunately, when we do this we leave all possibilities of praise behind us, and get deeper and deeper into the region of mere fault-finding. We say nothing of his wonderful admirations, and for his not less groundless dislikes ; but when we look at the general scope and tenor of the book, we can hardly convince ourselves that Mr. Carlyle is in earnest. We feel it impossible to get into a state of moral indignation on the matter, as some reviewers have done ; the whole thing looks so like a ponderous joke. Mr. Carlyle's morality may be expressed by the formula—act up to your character, that is, do whatever you like ; his politics may be expressed by the formula—seize whatever you have a chance of getting, and, when asked to give it up, answer by demanding more.

Thus he really seems to believe that he has satisfactorily disposed of all objections to Frederic's faithlessness, by the question, "How, *otherwise* than even as Friedrich did, would you, most veracious Smelfungus, have plucked out your Silesia from such an element and such a time?" which, in plain English, means that by setting before yourself an utterly unjustifiable end you become entitled to adopt any means, however iniquitous, for its attainment. Again, what can any reader make of the two following passages, occurring in the same volume, and but a few pages apart :—

"And indeed we will here advise our readers to prepare for dismissing altogether that notion of Friedrich's duplicity, mendacity, finesse, and the like, which was once widely current in the world ; and to attend always strictly

to what Friedrich says, if they wish to guess what he is thinking ; there being no such thing as 'mendacity' discoverable in Friedrich, when you take the trouble to inform yourself."—Vol. iii. p. 419.

"Magnanimous I can by no means call Friedrich to his allies and neighbours, nor even superstitiously veracious, in this business ; but he thoroughly understands, he alone, what first thing he wants out of it, and what an enormous wigged mendacity it is he has got to deal with. For the rest, he is at the gaming-table with these sharpers ; their dice all cogged ; and he knows it, and ought to profit by his knowledge of it. And, in short, to win his stake out of that foul weltering medley, and go home safe with it if he can."—Vol. iii. p. 478.

And this line of defence, not only immoral, but shabby—unworthy of any higher order of criminal than a thimble-rigger—is further supported on the ground that Frederic "did not *volunteer* into this foul element like the others," an assertion which is as nearly as possible the exact reverse of fact. Whether Frederic's invasion of Silesia was justifiable or not, we shall presently see ; but that, whether justifiable or unjustifiable, it was entirely voluntary on his part, is beyond question. Statements of this sort—and throughout these volumes their name is legion—together overthrow our confidence in the candour of the historian.

Space would soon fail us did we attempt anything like an enumeration of the fallacious arguments and perverted judgments with which the "Life of Frederic" abounds. We will recall to the recollection of our readers but one more example—perhaps the most remarkable of all. No one who ever read it has forgotten the story of the execution of Katte, the unhappy companion of Frederic's flight, when driven to despair by the brutality of his father. Mr. Carlyle

does his best to gloss over the barbarity of Frederic William ; but the facts represented even by his friendly pen—the sentence of the court-martial changed into one of death by the king—the sudden intimation to the prisoner—his night drive of sixty miles just before his execution, for no other purpose but that the prince should “see him die”—the prince himself tortured into a happy insensibility, and so only escaping the sight of the death of his friend,—make up a drama of refined cruelty which recalls Carrier or Lebon, or some other of the more distinguished ruffians of the French Revolution. And then, at the end of all this, Mr. Carlyle tells us that it was “indeed like the doings of the gods, which are cruel, though not that alone.” To the justly exasperated reader we can suggest this comfort, that a hobby is least mischievous when pushed to its greatest extreme. Readers may therefore restrain their wrath ; serious remonstrance would be even more out of place ; but a feeling of considerable irritation cannot be altogether restrained. If an author of ordinary powers and moderate pretensions were to indite nonsense of this sort, inextinguishable laughter would be his portion. But when it comes from a great teacher in Israel—a writer of rare genius and of vast influence ; when it is forced upon us with profound confidence, and our assent demanded with the loftiest arrogance, a plain man feels at once impatient and affronted. It is not so much that his sense of morality is offended,—the thing is too preposterous for that ; but he feels in a manner aggrieved by such outrageous insults to his understanding. What, on the other hand, are those qualities which gain Mr. Carlyle’s approval—which make him thus slow to mark all extremes of iniquity ? So far as we can see, mainly the possession of a mysterious something called veracity. Thus Frederic

William is forgiven everything, because he is "a wild man, wholly in earnest, veritable as the old rocks, and with a terrible volcanic fire in him too. There is a divine idea of fact put into him, the genus *Sham* never hatefuller to any man." We are not supplied with any clearer definition than the above of this precious characteristic; neither do we gain much knowledge of it from a study of those men by whom it has been possessed and displayed in action. Cromwell, Napoleon, Frederic William, Frederic the Great, what have these men in common? And our difficulties are further increased by the fact that Mr. Carlyle is by no means consistent in his predilections. Thus, in "Hero-Worship," the leaders of the Commons—Pym, Hampden, etc.—are lightly spoken of, as "worthy," but "unloveable" men, while in his "Cromwell" they are restored to favour; here we have Napoleon and his wars denounced as "grounded on Drawcansir rodomontade, grandiose Dick Turpinism, revolutionary madness, and unlimited expenditure of men and gunpowder;" while in the "History of the French Revolution" this same Napoleon was "a natural terror and horror to all phantasms, being himself of the genus Reality!" So true is it that eccentricities and dogmatism surely lead to inconsistency and self-contradiction.¹

But Mr. Carlyle is open to another charge, worse even than this wanton disregard of plain morality: he is not always scrupulous or candid in his statements of facts. When, as not unfrequently happens, the exigencies of his case drive him into a corner, he does not stick at a trifle to get out of it. We are far from saying that Mr. Carlyle is wilfully unfair or inaccurate—naturally he is, we should think, the most honest of men,—but we do mean to say, that to be constantly

¹ See too as to F. W. vol. i. p. 406; cf. vol. ii. p. 227, and vol. i. p. 424.

maintaining a pet paradox, or supporting a very doubtful hero, must have a demoralising effect on the mind. A writer with such aims ever before him cannot preserve the fairness of his spirit. Historic impartiality is one of the rarest of virtues, and is hardly attainable by a man who is always fighting against general opinion. It is not that directly erroneous statements are made, but hostile facts are so lightly thought of that they are dropped out of the narrative altogether; things are looked at from a false point of view, are seen by a coloured, not by a white light. Thus when Walpole sends subsidies to Austria he is covered with contempt; when Pitt does the same by Frederic he is exalted to all honour. France is, by some curious legerdemain, made responsible for all the evils that have ever befallen Germany, for the Seven Years' War, for the Thirty Years' War, both of which had begun before she drew the sword. Nay, in order to show how combustible were the elements in 1740, and so afford some colour of an excuse to Frederic, the Spanish war, into which popular clamour dragged Walpole, is defended,—a war which was afterwards condemned by the very men whose party-spirit brought it on, which, after lasting ten years, ended in a discreditable peace, without one of the objects for which it was undertaken having been gained. The story of Jenkins' ear is narrated with some pathos, and without the slightest indication of doubt, as an instance of the high-handed doings of the Spanish Guarda-Costas, and as "calculated to awaken a maritime public careful of its honour." And yet Mr. Carlyle can hardly be unaware that Burke treated the said story as a fable, and that good authorities have attributed the loss of Mr. Jenkins' ear (which he always carried about with him wrapped up in cotton), not to the truculence of Spanish Guarda-Costas, but to

the homely severities of the English pillory. When he comes on matters in which his favourites are directly concerned, his colouring is yet more illusory. We have already remarked on the way in which he glosses over the shameful story of Katte. In the same fashion he omits or softens down many instances of Frederic's harshness, as his injustice to Moritz at Colin, or the bitter contempt by which he broke his brother's heart; of his cruelty, as his order before Zorndorf that no quarter should be given; or his scandalous bombardment of Dresden, which Sismondi reprobates as "*une des taches les plus odieuses qui ternissent sa mémoire.*" Worse still, we hear not a word of those professions of regard and friendship with which this most "veracious" politician amused the Empress-Queen up to the very moment when he dashed into Silesia. Again, the miserable Voltaire-quarrels are set forth with much partiality, and at times convenient obscurity. Doubtless, Voltaire has exaggerated the treatment he and his niece received at Frankfort from coarse Prussian soldiers; but is there *no* truth in his story? Making every allowance for exaggeration, was not the conduct of these military bullies savage to a degree; and if Frederic did not expressly authorise their harshness, did he ever disavow it? Did he ever punish or rebuke any one in consequence of it? Was not the whole trick exactly what might have been expected from Frederic, —the result of an unamiable craving for a contemptible revenge? the meanness of the proceeding being, if possible, increased by the pains taken that Frederic's share in it should be concealed. How low this great prince should stoop to gratify his pleasure in inflicting pain, may be gathered from the fact of his having actually issued orders to curtail the sugar and chocolate consumed by his distinguished guest, a

charge which Mr. Carlyle, so far as we can see, does not venture to contradict. Often a vital fallacy is dexterously conveyed in a few words, as when we are told of "the Silesian *or partition of Prussia* question;"—the fact being that Silesia did not at that time belong to Prussia at all, and that the Empress-Queen, in her attempts on the province, was only seeking to regain her own. Very extraordinary, too, is Mr. Carlyle's way of dealing with Frederic's flight from the field at Mollwitz. That a young prince at his first battle should have been disturbed by the defeat of his cavalry, and even swept away in their headlong rout, is small discredit to him; Frederic's after life can well bear this slight weakness. But no spots must be on Mr. Carlyle's sun. Accordingly, instead of simply saying that Frederic ran away, he tells us that he "was snatched by Morgante into Fairyland, carried by Diana to the top of Pindus (or even by Proserpine to Tartarus, through a bad sixteen hours), till the battle whirlwind subsided." Maupertuis told the English Ambassador at Vienna how he rode off in the King's suite, how some Austrian hussars sallied out of Oppeln upon them, whereupon Frederic, exclaiming, "Farewell, my friends, I am better mounted than you all," gaily rode off, leaving his friends to captivity. No very great sin after all, except in the manner of doing the thing; but Mr. Carlyle will have none of it, and so disposes of Maupertuis by quoting against him Voltaire's account of his doings after Mollwitz. This is really too bad. Voltaire to be cited as a good authority against Maupertuis, the man of all others whom he most hated and despised! What a "world of scorn would look beautiful" in Mr. Carlyle's eyes at the idea of Voltaire being quoted as an authority against Frederic! This list of omissions and misrepresentations, ranging from

matters of the highest moment to matters seemingly of the lowest, might be extended almost indefinitely ; and it seems conclusive against the trustworthiness of Mr. Carlyle's history.

With all this, what has Mr. Carlyle made out ? The main purpose of his book seems to be twofold—*first*, to give to the world in Frederic the ideal of a patriot king ; *second*, to vindicate the Carlylian theory of government more completely and conclusively than has ever yet been done, by showing it successful in action. Has either of these things been accomplished ?

Till Mr. Carlyle took the matter in hand, people had pretty well made up their minds as to the character of Frederic. Lord Stanhope, the most impartial and sober-minded of historians, thus writes of him :—

“Vain, selfish, and ungrateful, destitute of truth and honour, he valued his companions, not from former kindness, but only for future use. But turn we to his talents, and we find the most consummate skill in war, formed by his own genius, and acquired from no master ; we find a prompt, sagacious, and unbending administration of affairs ; an activity and application seldom yielding to sickness, and never relaxed by pleasure, and seeking no repose except by variety of occupation ; a high and overruling ambition, capable of the greatest exploits, or of the most abject baseness, as either tended to its object, but never losing sight of that object ; pursuing it with dauntless courage and an eagle eye, sometimes in the heavens and sometimes through the mire, and never tolerating either in himself or in others one moment of languor, or one touch of pity.”

To reverse such judgment as this—to make the world recognise in Frederic not only a great warrior and statesman, but also an honest politician and a high-minded man, is Mr. Carlyle's leading object. Whether or not he has succeeded in this object we

shall hereafter see ; but, in the first place, we must remark that his devotion thereto has, in one important respect, been prejudicial to the real value and interest of his work. His endeavour to set Frederic before us in a new light makes him dwell upon the influence and doings of that prince, to the entire exclusion of the various elements, at once of discord and of progress, which were then awakened in the world. Mr. Carlyle could never be a supporter of the "dynamical" theory of history ; but in this book he rejects it altogether, and thereby misses the real grandeur of his theme. In the struggle which we know by the name of the Seven Years' War, many forces were at work very different from the ambition of Frederic. The national and political spirit of Germany was moving on the face of the waters. It had slept a deep sleep ever since the death of Gustavus on the field of Lützen. The old mediæval tendencies towards independence and self-government had been utterly overwhelmed in the Thirty Years' War. A gloomy reign of darkness and terror—of Austria and Popery—had lasted for some hundred years. But the time had now come, though the fulness of time was not yet. The league formed against Frederic, which Pitt, with pardonable exaggeration, styled "the most powerful and malignant confederacy that ever yet has threatened the independence of mankind," roused, to some extent, that independence which it menaced. Despite the blind of the accession of Sweden, it was universally felt to be a league of Catholics against Protestantism, and the spirit of the sixteenth century swelled high in favour of the successor of the "Lion of the North." Clement XIII. did Frederic an invaluable service when he sent a sword and a velvet hat, and dove of pearls, enriched with his pontifical benediction, to Marshal Daun. It was a struggle, too, of

despotism against liberty. Austria, the overthrower of the Hanseatic cities, the destroyer of Bohemia, the violator of the Constitution of Hungary and of the Low Countries, could never be regarded as other than the bitter foe of freedom and of German nationality. In every way it was a contest between darkness and light, for the awakening mind of Germany was naturally on the side of German independence. Thus all the stars in their courses fought for Frederic. In his behalf—the sceptic, the despot, the French *littérateur*—were enlisted the influences of Protestantism, of love of liberty, and of the rising power of German thought. The spirit of the times was on the side of Frederic—an aid which, even if despised by him or undeserved, should not have been omitted in the story of his life. Such omission may tend to the greater glory of Frederic, though we doubt this; but it certainly is a serious injustice to the reader, and detracts sadly from the dignity and the value of the record.

But to return to Frederic's character. The point on which he is most generally condemned is his conduct of the foreign affairs of Prussia. In his relations with other kingdoms he is accused of unprincipled ambition and utter faithlessness. Now we should have been well content had the question of Frederic's public morality or immorality been left without remark to the judgment of the reader. We have no great love for that style of history-writing which is always pointing a moral. We prefer greatly the passionless indifference of Thucydides, who sheds his light alike upon the just and the unjust. We have no inclination to preach ourselves, and we have still less inclination to listen to the preaching of others. If Mr. Carlyle would only tell us calmly and truthfully what took place, and then leave us alone! But this

is precisely what Mr. Carlyle will not do. He is for ever in the pulpit ; exhorting, prophesying, denouncing. If his doctrine were sound, and his preaching dull, we might silently go to sleep. But no slumbers are possible to Mr. Carlyle's hearers ; and as we cannot choose but listen, and listen to much that is quite wrong, we are forced to take up our testimony on the other side.

Two events in Frederic's life may be taken as decisive of the case—the invasion of Silesia and the partition of Poland. Of these the former is, in this point of view, the more important. For here undoubtedly we have the key to the whole of Frederic's career. If his seizure of Silesia, in the first instance, was justifiable, the guilt of what followed does not rest with him. Mr. Carlyle has laboured this point in his hero's favour, and quite fairly : “ His first expedition to Silesia,—a rushing out to seize your own stolen horse, while the occasion answered,—was a voluntary one ; produced, we may say, by Friedrich's own thought and the Invisible Powers. But the rest were all purely compulsory,—to defend the horse he had seized.” Doubtless this last sentence is quite true. All Frederic's subsequent history runs up to the invasion of Silesia. His wars were undertaken either to ward off anticipated danger from this coveted province, or to defend it when openly attacked. They all take their character, so to speak, from the original outbreak in 1740. It becomes therefore a matter of some importance to see what was the nature of Frederic's claims to Silesia. The sort of information which the reader will gain from Mr. Carlyle on this point may be gathered from the following passages :—

“ No fair judge can blame the young man that he laid hold of the flaming Opportunity in this manner, and obeyed the new omen. To seize such an opportunity, and peril-

ously mount upon it, was the part of a young magnanimous king, less sensible to the perils and more to the other considerations, than one older would have been."

"Friedrich, after such trial and proof as has seldom been, got his claims on Schlesien allowed by the Destinies. His claims on Schlesien; and on infinitely higher things; which were found to be his and his nation's: though he had not been consciously thinking of them in making that adventure. For, as my poor Friend insists, there *are* Laws valid in Earth and Heaven; and the great soul of the world is just."—Vol. iii. pp. 141, 335.

This can hardly be considered satisfactory historical information; and really there is little better to be got. We suspect that very few, even among the careful students of these volumes, could tell what Frederic's claims on Silesia really were. Explicit statement of them there is none; but from the obscurities of the first volume the diligent reader may glean an idea of their nature, though a vague and insufficient one. We will do our best to state them shortly and plainly.

When Silesia first comes clearly into the light of European history—about the middle of the tenth century—it had been Christianised, and was governed by Poland. Divisions of the heritage of the Polish crown among the members of the Royal family made Silesia independent about the middle of the twelfth century. Towards the middle of the fourteenth century it became a feudatory of Bohemia, or rather a part of that kingdom, partly by resignations of various Silesian Dukes, partly by a fortunate marriage of the son of that king of Bohemia who fell at Cressy. From this time Silesia shared the fortunes, good and evil, of Bohemia; adopted the doctrines of Huss, welcomed the Reformation, and supported the cause of the "Winter-King;" and had therefore to endure, in a greater or less degree, the miseries of the wars of Zisca, and the yet greater miseries of the Thirty

Years' War. The treaty of Westphalia made no difference in the political position of Silesia; only secured to it freedom of religious opinion, a privilege which the house of Austria laboured perseveringly to take away. In 1537, Silesia, or rather certain portions of Silesia, became connected with Prussia in the following manner:—Frederic Duke of Brieg and Liegnitz,—principalities in Silesia, concluded a treaty of succession or agreement, to succeed reciprocally, on failure of heirs to either, with Joachim the Second, Elector of Brandenburg. Doubts, however, existed from the first as to the legality of this treaty, and nine years after its execution it was declared null by the King of Bohemia, afterwards the Emperor Ferdinand the First. In this declaration of nullity the states of Bohemia concurred, and the Duke of Liegnitz at least acquiesced. Nay, the states of Bohemia were the first to challenge the proceeding. Mr. Carlyle calmly assumes that the paction was "questionable by no mortal." But the point is not quite so clear. The right of a vassal to dispose of his lands is most distinctly though implicitly limited by the condition that he must not dispose of them to the injury of his suzerain and of his country. Would the Earl of Warwick, under our Edward iv., have been entitled, by the laws of England, to make such a "heritage-brotherhood" with the Duke of Burgundy? The illustration is perhaps a strong one. But it brings out the principle which justifies the states of Bohemia and the King in what they did; a principle which not only regulated the whole feudal system, but which lies at the root of all tenures now,—the principle that a vassal does not hold his land absolutely,—that he has no right to alienate it according to his own arbitrary wish,—that, in short, as lawyers put it, "no man is in law the absolute owner of lands: he can only hold an estate in them." The rights

accruing to Prussia, in virtue of these transactions, constituted Frederic's best claim on Silesia. Another and a weaker ground for justifying the invasion arose as follows :—The principality of Jägerndorf, also a district of Silesia, had come into the possession of Joachim Frederic, Elector of Brandenburg, by various steps which it is not necessary to narrate here. Joachim gave it to his second son, John George. The new Duke of Jägerndorf, unfortunately for himself, warmly supported the Elector-Palatine in his attempt on the crown of Bohemia. The result of that attempt, and the fate of the "Winter-King," is well known. The Duke was laid under the Ban of the Empire, and of course forfeited Jägerndorf, the investiture of which was conferred on the princes of the house of Lichtenstein. With the merits of the cause which the unlucky John George espoused we have nothing at present to do. He played and lost ; and accordingly forfeited his possessions. The proceedings of the House of Austria may have been harsh, but cannot be called illegal. The danger had been too great for lenity. Rulers more merciful than the House of Hapsburg has ever shown itself, would hardly have proved lenient to the adherents of a cause which had nearly torn from them such a possession as the kingdom of Bohemia. Mr. Carlyle, of course, attacks this proceeding as "contrary to all law !" Unfortunately for himself he gives his reasons, or rather his reason, which is merely that Johann George had left "innocent sons ;" as if rulers had always recognised, or were at all bound to recognise, the amiable doctrine that the political sins of parents do not descend to children. Lastly, in 1686, the Elector Frederic William expressly renounced his pretensions to Jägerndorf and the other Silesian duchies in exchange for a district, contiguous to his own dominions, and

called "the circle of Schwiebus." Frederic's son was jockeyed out of this circle of Schwiebus for the sum of £25,000 ; but nevertheless the renunciation of the father, if, indeed, that renunciation was required, remained good.

To rake up from the dust of past centuries pretensions such as these, and make them the ground for war, is conduct the rectitude of which it would be idle to discuss. No wonder that Mr. Carlyle finds it convenient to talk vaguely of Frederic's "claims," without clearly telling us what these claims were. If such pleas are to be regarded as a cause of war, the world could never be at peace for a week together. What would be said of France were she to take up arms that she might enlarge her borders till they should be as they were at the peace of Amiens? What would be said of the King of Holland were he to begin a European war that he might regain the Belgian provinces? Nay, fresh as the wound is, would Austria be held justified were she, without any new provocation, to overrun with her troops the plains of Lombardy? But Frederic's conduct was far more flagrant than any of the cases we have supposed. His claims were antiquated—prescribed by the lapse of centuries. It is, to say the least, exceedingly doubtful whether they were at the first well founded. Beyond doubt they had been distinctly waived by his ancestors, and prince after prince of his house had acquiesced in that waiver. And lastly, Prussia was a party to treaties whereby the integrity of those dominions which Frederic treacherously invaded was expressly guaranteed. Of course Mr. Carlyle laughs at the Pragmatic Sanction: "the only real treaties are a well-trained army, and your treasury full." Truly a comforting doctrine for the wellbeing of mankind, calculated to promote peace and good-will, and stop

the present mania for armaments,—in all ways well worthy of a great teacher of the public mind. But surely we cannot disregard the fact that all the States of Europe, Prussia included, had bound themselves to maintain the Pragmatic Sanction—a treaty which regulated the Austrian succession, and secured the Austrian dominions. That instrument, in the weighty words of Lord Macaulay, “was placed under the protection of the public faith of the whole civilised world.” And yet Mr. Carlyle would convince us that Frederic did well to violate his obligations under that instrument, because, forsooth, “flaming Opportunity” invited him; that is, because Austria was poor, because the Emperor was dead, and because the young matronhood of the daughter of the man to whom Frederic probably owed his life might prove unequal to the cares of empire.

The results of this treachery were such as might easily have been foreseen. When war had once begun all the nations of the earth gathered together to the fray. According to Mr. Carlyle, France is to blame for this. Why should she have interfered, and have so “palpably made herself the author of the conflagration of deliriums that ensued for above seven years henceforth; nay, for above twenty years”? Undoubtedly France was wrong. We are in no way concerned to defend her. But is it just that she should bear the whole, or even the chief blame? It would have been right, of course, in her to have kept aloof, and seen other nations enriching themselves with the spoils of the great Austrian heritage; but such virtue, rare at any time, would have been unprecedented and incomprehensible in the middle of the eighteenth century. Why, we might rather ask, should she have refrained from the plunder? She was bound by no ties to Austria. She had not been recently an ally and friend

of the House of Hapsburg. On the contrary, France and Austria had been foes for long ages. It was too much to expect that either of these Powers would let slip a favourable opportunity of humiliating and reducing the other. And yet France is loaded with abuse for having yielded to temptation, and gone to war openly and above-board ; while Frederic's treacherous robbery is justified and praised. It is really too much that history should be turned topsy-turvy in this fashion. On Frederic, and on Frederic alone, lies the blame of having commenced this fearful strife. But for his unprincipled ambition, peace would have probably been preserved. In peace lay the only hope of safety for Austria. France and England were ruled by ministers to whom peace had been always dear. Russia had nothing to gain by war, and showed no inclination to move. These Powers, together with Poland and Holland, had expressly declared their intention of maintaining the Pragmatic Sanction. And no one of them showed any symptom of falsifying these declarations until the example of the King of Prussia called the whole world to arms. "On his head is all the blood which was shed in a war which raged during many years and in every quarter of the globe, the blood of the column of Fontenoy, the blood of the mountaineers who were slaughtered at Culloden. The evils produced by his wickedness were felt in lands where the name of Prussia was unknown ; and, in order that he might rob a neighbour whom he had promised to defend, black men fought on the coast of Coromandel, and red men scalped each other by the great lakes of North America."¹ The beginning of strife is like the letting out of waters. It is a terrible question,—At whose door lies the guilt of a war? And by what motive driven did Frederic do these

¹ Lord Macaulay's Essay on Frederic.

things? In his manifestoes he spoke a little, and Mr. Carlyle now speaks a great deal, of "claims" on Silesia; but it must be admitted that Frederic did not, as a rule, pretend to more virtue than he had. In his letters and conversations he ascribed his conduct to its true motives—a desire to extend his territory, and a vain craving for *la gloire*.

His schemes were carried out with profound secrecy and duplicity. He preferred no demand for redress, he made no declaration of war. He continued his assurances of amity up till the last moment, and had overrun Silesia with his troops before Austria knew that they had any cause of quarrel against her. As he began the war, so he carried it on. With every new success he rose, "sibyl-like," in his demands; and yet Mr. Carlyle affects to be mightily indignant because the world would not credit his professions of moderation. But whenever his own ends were secured, he cared little for the safety of his allies, or for the preservation of his own honour. After the battle of Chotusitz, Maria Theresa agreed to cede Silesia, and he abandoned France and Bavaria without a thought. France, pressed by Austria and England, was soon reduced to desperate straits; Bavaria was overrun by bands of Austrian hussars, and her unhappy Elector hurried heartbroken to the grave. Then Frederic took alarm at the ascendancy of Austria, allied himself anew with France, and without complaint, without cause of offence, a second time invaded the Austrian dominions. A year had barely elapsed when he again deserted France, and concluded another peace with Austria, now sufficiently humiliated. In fact, his policy was simply this: to seize whatever he could, and then so to play off France against Austria as to prevent the fruits of his robberies being forced out of hands. The policy was astute, and it was pursued with perfect

resolution, rapacity, and faithlessness. A desire to stand well in public opinion, somewhat strange in such a politician,—connected perhaps with the real admiration and the love of letters which formed part of his character,—prompted him from time to time to justify his conduct in the eyes of Europe.¹ Thus, on the occasion of his second attack on Austria in 1744, he published a letter or address to the people of England. He does not seem to have taken much by the motion. “A poor performance,” writes Horace Walpole of it; “his Voltaires and his *litterati* should correct his works before they are printed. To pen manifestoes worse than the lowest *commis* that is kept jointly by two or three Margraves, is insufferable.”

On the question of the partition of Poland we have less to say. Our readers will not hear from us any “shrieks or foam-lipped curses” over that proceeding. Mr. Carlyle defends or palliates it by drawing a forcible and humorous picture of Poland in a state of “anarchy, pestilence, famine, and pigs eating your dead bodies,” deliverance from which would be a manifest blessing for Poland herself, and hardly less so for her neighbours. The Poles are plainly no favourites with Mr. Carlyle; and their constitution, as described by him, with the right of confederation—that is, the right of any man to disobey the law when he might think fit; and the *Liberum Veto*—that is, the right of any man to stop the proceedings of the whole Parliament,—“an ever-flowing fountain of anarchy, joyful to the Polish nation,”—certainly seems the most remarkable form of social existence under which mortal men ever attempted to live and prosper.

¹ Mr. Carlyle differs from this, and finds in Frederic “not the least anxiety to stand well with any reader.” This may be true of Frederic in his autobiography, but not as a rule. Witness the instance in the text, his publication of the papers found at Dresden, and his “Apologie de ma Conduite” in 1757.

We should like to quote much here, but we must content ourselves with the summing up :—

“The Poles put fine colours on all this ; and are much contented with themselves. The Russians they regard as intrinsically an inferior barbarous people ; and to this day you will hear indignant Polack Gentlemen bursting out in the same strain : ‘Still barbarian, sir ; no culture, no literature,’—inferior because they do not make verses equal to ours ! How it may be with the verses, I will not decide ; but the Russians are inconceivably superior in respect that they have, to a singular degree among Nations, the gift of obeying, of being commanded. Polack Chivalry sniffs at the mention of such a gift. Polack Chivalry got sore stripes for wanting this gift. And in the end, got striped to death, and flung out of the world, for continuing blind to the want of it, and never acquiring it. Beyond all the verses in Nature, it is essential to every Chivalry and Nation and Man. ‘Polite Polish Society for the last thirty years has felt itself to be in a most halcyon condition,’ says Rulhière ;¹ ‘given up to the agreeable, and to that only ;’ charming evening-parties, and a great deal of flirting : full of the benevolences, the philanthropies, the new ideas,—given up especially to the pleasing idea of ‘*Laissez-faire*, and everything will come right of itself.’ ‘What a discovery !’ said every liberal Polish mind ; ‘for thousands of years, how people did torment themselves trying to steer the ship ; never knowing that the plan was, to let go the helm, and honestly sit down to your mutual amusements and powers of pleasing !’

“To this condition of beautifully phosphorescent rot-heap has Poland ripened, in the helpless reigns of those poor Augusts ;—the fulness of time not now far off, one would say ? It would complete the picture, could I go into the state of what is called ‘Religion’ in Poland. Dissenterism, of various poor types, is extensive ; and, over-against it, is such a type of Jesuit Fanaticism as has no fellow in that time. Of which there have been truly savage and sanguinary outbreaks, from time to time ; especially one at Thorn, forty years ago, which shocked Friedrich Wilhelm and the whole

¹ Rulhière, i. 216 (a noteworthy passage).

Protestant world. Polish Orthodoxy in that time, and perhaps still in ours, is a thing worth noting. A late Tourist informs me, he saw on the streets of Stettin, not long since, a drunk human creature staggering about, who seemed to be a Baltic Sailor, just arrived; the dirtiest, or among the dirtiest, of mankind; who, as he reeled along, kept slapping his hands upon his breast, and shouting, in exultant soliloquy, 'Polack, Catholik!' *I am a Pole and Orthodox, ye inferior two-legged entities!*—In regard to the Jesuit Fanaticisms at Thorn and elsewhere, no blame can attach to the poor Augusts, who always leant the other way, what they durst or could. Nor is speciality of blame due to them on any score; it was 'like People, like King,' all along;—and they, such their luck, have lived to bring in the fulness of time."—Vol. vi. pp. 409, 410.

Looking upon these things, Mr. Carlyle is clearly of opinion that Poland was moribund, and had well deserved to die. He makes a somewhat novel application of the old analogy between the State and the Individual, maintaining that just as when a man "has filled the measure of his wicked blockheadisms, sins and brutal nuisancings, there are Gibbets provided, there are Laws provided; and you can, in an articulate regular manner, hang him and finish him to general satisfaction," so nations fallen into depths of decay must be disposed of by some similar process. There is much truth in all this, but the analogy fails in one important point, namely, that it is not so easy to hang a nation as to hang one man. The "finishing" is an essential element in Mr. Carlyle's process; and to finish a nation is a hard thing. Poland, for example, has not been finished to this day. Had the partition of Poland, once accomplished, proved to be a matter disposed of for ever, had no re-partitions and rebellions ensued, Mr. Carlyle's defence might have been held conclusive; but, as things have turned out, the case is not quite so clear. Of all the parties

concerned, however, the Czarina was most free from blame. Mr. Merivale, in his recently published volume of *Essays*, has shown that she interfered not only in the interests of order, but as the champion of religious liberty. The territory which she took from Poland had been for long a debateable land between two barbarous nations. She interfered in answer to the appeals and supplications of millions of serfs, almost all orthodox Greeks, ground down to the earth by a savage and bigoted aristocracy, the victims at once of tyranny and fanaticism. The Archbishop of Cracow had induced the Diet to bind themselves by a solemn vow never to extend toleration to schismatics,—thus adding another to the many instances in which successful Ultramontaniam has proved the ruin of nations. Still, judged of by the results, the partition of Poland was, to say the least of it, a serious blunder, and the above defence can be pleaded on behalf of Catherine alone. Yet it would be well for Frederic's reputation if nothing worse than his share in this transaction could be laid to his charge.

Students of the military science will find much to interest them in these volumes. Not only are the battles narrated, as we said before, distinctly and with brilliancy, so that ordinary readers can understand and enjoy; but no little skirmish is forgotten and the plans of Frederic's campaigns are mapped out in a way which must for soldiers be both interesting and instructive. We can imagine no more profitable study than the study of Frederic's marches and manœuvres—in which, so far as we can judge, his military genius is even more conspicuous than on the field of actual battle, always excepting the signal triumphs of Rossbach and Leuthen. Indeed, for so great a captain, Frederic committed some extraordinary blunders in the work of fighting. At Colin, Hoch-

kirch, and Cunnersdorf, disregarding the counsels of his best officers, he rushed into errors which brought him to the brink of destruction. At Prague, again, he rejected advice which, had it been followed, would have secured to him not only the victory he gained, but the total and final overthrow of the foe. In fact, Frederic was not a heaven-born general. Lord Stanhope, in the passage we before quoted, was quite mistaken when he spoke of Frederic's skill in war as "formed by his own genius and acquired from no master." It was formed by long experience, and acquired, not only from the teaching of his own veterans, but from some severe practical lessons administered in his second Silesian war, by old Marshal Traun. "No general," says Frederic himself, "committed more faults than did the King in this campaign."¹ It was a campaign of manœuvring not fighting, and Frederic was out-manœuvred. His campaigns in the Seven Years' War had very different issues. Beaten he sometimes was, out-marched or out-manœuvred never.

It would be out of place to discuss here at any length Frederic's qualities as a commander, even were we qualified to do so ; but the constitution of his army, and his bearing towards both his officers and their men, are points of general interest, and which throw some light on his character. What manner of man did he show himself to be in this most important relation of his life ? The first thing which strikes us is, that a harsher chief never led men to victory. He praised rarely, rewarded almost never, and punished unsparingly. On his officers he visited mere blunders with cruel severity. Bevern, a brave and skilful captain, was sent to Stettin in disgrace because of the

¹ He always admitted that he regarded this campaign as his school in the art of war, and M. de Traun as his teacher.

doubtful result of the battle of Breslau, fought in circumstances which even Mr. Carlyle admits to have been "horribly difficult." Schmettau, for the capitulation of Dresden,—a capitulation expressly authorised by Frederic himself about a month before it happened,—was disgraced and never employed again. Years after, when the aged veteran ventured to complain of the scanty pension allowed him from the Invalid List, he received the gracious answer that he should be "thankful he had not lost his head." General Finck, an able soldier, of tried skill and courage, who had been thought worthy to be intrusted with the command of the army after the disaster of Cunnersdorf, was ordered by the king, against his own vehement remonstrances, into a position of extraordinary difficulty and danger at Maxen—"has a Sphinx riddle on his mind, such as soldiers seldom had." He failed to extricate himself, and was forced to capitulate. For this he received a year's imprisonment in Spandau, and was thereafter dismissed the service. Throughout his life Frederic kept up a strange vindictiveness towards every one who had been, however innocently, connected with this disgrace; possibly because he must have felt that he had himself in great measure to blame for it. Years after, when an officer, who had belonged to the capitulating army, fallen into poverty and evil times, sent in a humble petition for a pension, Frederic wrote on the margin, with cruel sarcasm: "Assign him a pension by all means! assign it on the profits of Maxen." Such conduct betrays unmistakeably a cruel nature, and is very short-sighted besides. Frederic was not better served in consequence of it, but worse. Instances not a few occurred in these wars, in which his generals, from an undue dread of his displeasure, rushed upon disaster against their own better judgment. Thus, in 1760,

Fouquet, "the Bayard" of Prussia, reluctantly obeying Frederic's mistaken orders (Spandau and disgrace might have been awaiting him otherwise), lost Silesia, and some 10,000 men. Fear indeed is a deadly foe to good counsel. No man can exercise the full powers of his mind when disturbed by the knowledge that a mistake, however innocent, will certainly entail punishment. Accordingly no wise chief, in war or anything else, was ever other than lenient to mere errors of judgment.

The constitution of Frederic's army was in the highest degree remarkable. It was officered by Prussians and nobles; but the troops were gathered from all quarters of the earth, and by every possible device of lying and kidnapping. Mr. Carlyle never alludes to Frederic's recruiting expedients, though he does to those of his father. But Frederic was, in this respect, even worse than Frederic William. He had his miserable crimps spread all over Europe, kidnapping peasants, or seducing the troops of his allies; sticking at no crime to gain men to be sacrificed to the ambition of this "last of the Kings." He profited by their disgraceful services, and paid them; but if they were detected he disowned them, and left them to their fate. The cruelty of the treatment to which the troops thus recruited were subjected was such as few armies have ever experienced. The following description, though given in a work of fiction, is no whit exaggerated:—

"The life the private soldier led was a frightful one to any but men of iron courage and endurance. There was a corporal to every three men, marching behind them, and pitilessly using the cane; so much so that it used to be said that in action there was a front rank of privates and a second rank of sergeants and corporals to drive them on. . . . The punishment was incessant. Every officer had the

liberty to inflict it; and in peace it was more cruel than in war. . . . I have seen the bravest men of the army cry like children at a cut of the cane; I have seen a little ensign of fifteen call out a man of fifty from the ranks,—a man who had been in a hundred battles,—and he has stood presenting arms, and sobbing and howling like a baby while the young wretch lashed him over the arms and thighs with the stick. In the day of action this man would dare anything. A button might be awry *then* and nobody touched him; but when they had made the brute fight then they lashed him again into subordination.”¹

This horrible life was uncheered by hope. The possibility of promotion at once awakes the stimulus of personal ambition and imparts a feeling of professional dignity; but for the Prussian soldier there was no such possibility. The army must be officered by nobles alone. This illustrious prince, in whom Mr. Carlyle discovers, as the soul of all his noble tendencies, “that he has an endless appetite for men of merit, and feels, consciously and otherwise, that they are the one thing beautiful, the one thing needful to him,” when peace came, would dismiss any officer who was not noble, whatever his services might have been. In spite of all his cant about equality and sneers at blood, he was in practice a bitter aristocrat. He carried his reverence of German quarterings even into his administration of civil affairs. He would not allow a merchant to travel at more than a certain fixed rate of expense; he would allow a nobleman’s estate to be purchased by none but a nobleman. The punishments by which this motley army was kept in order were frightful. Death was regarded as a secondary punishment. In order to insure a capital sentence a strange and horrible crime of child-murder became prevalent. The soldiers shrank from the guilt of suicide; but they

¹ Thackeray, “Barry Lyndon.”

thought it little harm to secure their own release from suffering by causing the death of an innocent child. That even such an army as this fought well under Frederic is matter for no surprise. For they knew their trade well, and on the field of battle that knowledge must come into play. Men are essentially combative by nature; and the hounds love the huntsman who can best show them the prey. But they fought unstirred by any of those influences which almost make fighting virtue. It is too bad of Mr. Carlyle to compare such an army as this to Cromwell's Ironsides. He has elsewhere described it far more truly,—"fighters animated only by drill-sergeants, mess-room moralities, and the drummer's cat!"¹ A few of the native Prussian soldiers did show something of stern enthusiasm, as at Leuthen; but these were the exception. The stock of such men was soon exhausted; and the rest were merely the best fighting brutes, perfectly trained, and handled by a master. Never, we think, did the profession of arms wear a less inviting aspect. The army, as a body, was animated by nothing of that religious and political enthusiasm which made the troops of the Commonwealth the finest soldiers the world has ever seen, or of that passion for distinction and glory, that fervid devotion to a leader, which carried the legions of Napoleon triumphantly to the close of many a bloody day. When Frederic himself implored them to return to the charge at Colin, he had for his answer, "No, no, Fritz; we have done enough for eightpence a day." No such thought was present to any English or French soldier when brought up to turn the doubtful battle at Marston Moor or Marengo.

The one inexplicable puzzle to our mind is, that this army never rose up in impetuous revolt and put a

¹ "French Revolution," vol. iii.

stop to the whole thing, by shooting, if necessary, the king and every officer they had. We are told indeed that Frederic was never quite safe on parade, and no wonder. The troops deserted, when opportunity offered, as at the retreat from Dresden, in scores and hundreds; but no mutiny was ever brought to a successful issue, though the attempt was more than once made. The difficulty of combination, in such circumstances, is almost insuperable; and we fear it must be added, that there is a tendency in human nature to cower before stern oppression. Of this strange army we get no knowledge from these pages; we are presented instead with an imaginary picture of high-minded Prussians, devoted to their king, and overflowing with patriotism and Lutheran hymns.

The third of Mr. Carlyle's volumes opens with rejoicings over the beginning of Frederic's civil reforms—rejoicings not wholly undeserved. He showed a real anxiety for the speedy administration of justice, and did his best to secure for his subjects this great blessing. He abolished torture. He granted to all sects, except the Jews, perfect religious liberty. He allowed uncontrolled freedom of thought and expression. These were great boons. But one boon, greater than all these, was persistently withheld, namely, freedom of action. "My people," he said, "may think as they please, provided I may act as I please!" Never was a people so regulated and disciplined in every relation of life. They could not marry, or buy or sell, or travel abroad, or stay at home, save as the king thought fit. And the extraordinary thing is, that he did all this superintendence himself. He had absolutely no ministers. Those who are curious to see how nearly the life of a great and illustrious prince may resemble the life of a galley-slave should read Lord Macaulay's sketch of Frederic's

business habits. He himself did all the work of governing Prussia, and what that work must have been, owing to his love of meddling and distrust of subordinates, it is hardly possible for us to conceive. A nobleman could not go to Aix-la-Chapelle for his health; a man of letters could not go to Holland to procure information for a history of that country, without special permission from the king.¹ Sir Charles Hanbury Williams thus writes to Mr. Fox in 1751: "If a courier is to be despatched to Versailles, or a minister to Vienna, his Prussian Majesty draws himself the instructions for the one, and writes the letters for the other. This you will say is great; but if a dancer at the opera has disputes with a singer, or if one of those performers wants a new pair of stockings, a plume for his helmet, or a finer petticoat, the same king of Prussia sits in judgment on the cause, and with his own hand answers the dancer's or the singer's letter."² His leading idea was to make Prussia a barrack-yard. He was persuaded that his people could not act or think wisely for themselves, and that he therefore must think and act for them. In his conception of how to promote the wellbeing of a nation he was far inferior to Peter the Great. The Czar laboured to raise brutes into men; Frederic's aim was that men should remain as children.

Perhaps the most inexcusable and pernicious development of Frederic's love of meddling was when he interfered with the administration of the law. The

¹ The marginal notes written by Frederic on the reports sent to him by his ministers, or more properly speaking, secretaries, are characteristic, and sometimes most amusing. The answer which he gives to a petition from some officials objecting to the promotion of their juniors over their heads, is well worthy of attention among ourselves: "I have in my stable a parcel of old mules, who have served me a long while, but I have not yet found any of them apply to be made superintendents of the stable."

² Quoted in Lord Mahon's "History of England." Appendix, vol. iv.

story of Miller Arnold's lawsuit is well known. We have no space to go into that matter here, further than is necessary to illustrate Frederic's style of government. If, after repeated investigation and consideration, all the best judges in a country should agree on a point in an intricate and difficult branch of law ; if, in spite of remonstrances and threats from a despotic king, they adhere to their opinion as one which they cannot, on their consciences, change or modify, people will be apt to think that they must be in the right. Not so the king of Prussia. Without misgiving he reversed the decision ; abused the judges who pronounced it only a little less coarsely than his father would have done ; and rewarded them for their conscientiousness by dismissal and imprisonment, finding them liable also in damages to the successful litigant. The results were what might have been expected. For some time after the Courts of Law found the utmost difficulty in enforcing their authority ; and it is gratifying to know that hundreds of peasants used to throng under the king's windows with petitions in their hands, all loudly shouting, "Please your Majesty, consider our case ; we have been far worse treated than the Arnolds." How the king relished this practical result of his interference we are not informed. Finally Frederic's successor had to pay out of his own pocket all the expenses occasioned by this freak of royal equity, and so hush up the matter.

Frederic's commercial policy opens up a topic at once more attractive and instructive. In many respects it was worthy of attention, and not the less so because he violated, pretty consistently, all the doctrines of free-trade.

"To prevent disappointment, I ought to add that Friedrich is the reverse of orthodox in 'Political Economy ;' that he had not faith in Free Trade, but the reverse ; nor had ever

heard of those Ultimate Evangels, unlimited competition, fair start, and perfervid race by all the world (towards '*cheap-and-nasty*,' as the likeliest winning-post for all the world), which have since been vouchsafed us."—Vol. iv. p. 370.

"They are eloquent, ruggedly strong Essays, those of a Mirabeau Junior upon Free Trade; they contain, in condensed shape, everything we were privileged to hear, seventy years later, from all organs, coach-horns, jews-harps, and scrannel-pipes, *pro* and *contra*, on the same sublime subject: 'God is great, and Plugson of Undershot is his Prophet. Thus saith the Lord, Buy in the cheapest market, sell in the dearest!'"—Vol. vi. p. 351.

It is no cause of reproach to Frederic that he did not understand or appreciate free-trade; but it is difficult to keep one's temper when a man like Mr. Carlyle condescends to such idle buffoonery as this. It was hard enough to get free-trade adopted; it is even now hard enough to get it carried out; and it is very intolerable that a great writer and pretentious teacher should indulge in meaningless sneers at a policy which he cannot intelligently attack. That Frederic was wrong in many of his views, as his horror at the precious metals leaving the country, his love of monopolies, his belief that manufactures would flourish at his will, that trade could be fostered by restrictive laws, will now-a-days hardly be disputed. On the other hand, he adopted a course with regard to many matters, which, though we may hastily condemn it as unsound, would seem, judged by the result, to have been eminently successful; and Mr. Carlyle would have rendered better service by helping us to a solution of these difficulties, than by his vague denunciations of the "Dismal Science," as he thinks it humorous to call Political Economy.

It is hard indeed to say whether we are more astonished by Frederic's mode of sustaining the

burdens of war, or by his power of repairing the ruin which war leaves behind. Even seen, as it only now can be seen, by dim glimpses, his war budget is indeed wonderful; to extravagant British minds almost inconceivable. The pay of the Prussian soldier was small, and when peace came every unnecessary man was rigorously paid off. The economy practised in every branch of the public service was carried to the verge of meanness. The frugality practised in the Royal household was unexampled, though it were much to be desired that it should gain imitators. Moreover, the war was to a great extent conducted on the principle of making war support itself. In Saxony, an enemy's country, levies of men and contributions were made by Frederic during all those terrible years. Still the mystery remains quite inexplicable: how did he manage to come through that fearful conflict without incurring a penny of debt? And then another curious question arises, and one of some moment when nations take to fighting, Would it not have been better if debt *had* been incurred? Would not much suffering have been avoided if more money had been forthcoming? Though the nation did eventually recover, at the time the agony was almost too great for endurance. Now, might not this agony have been greatly mitigated, might not much personal suffering have been spared, much property have been preserved, by borrowing from the resources of the future? Then, again, as to the tampering with the currency. Can it ever be good in the long-run for the financial wellbeing of a nation that the coinage should be debased as Frederic debased it?

Yet more astonishing than Frederic's management of the war was the way in which Prussia, under his guidance, recovered from its effects. The state of the country at the close of the Seven Years' conflict is

not easy to be imagined. The population had been decreased by ten per cent.; wide tracts of country lay desolate; the villages were depopulated; the fields were uncultivated; at best, only women and children remained to follow the plough. The very seed-corn had been devoured. The towns were hardly in better plight than the country. In Berlin itself a third part of the population was supported by alms. But if the guilty ambition of Frederic had reduced his country to this point of misery, it is only fair to add that his industry and administrative capacity soon raised her out of it. In some three or four years Prussia was restored to comparative prosperity. There could hardly be a more interesting or instructive study than to inquire carefully how this was done. Readers who remember Lord Macaulay's elaborate account of the debasement of the coinage under William, and the measures taken to restore it, will understand what might have been done here. Unhappily Mr. Carlyle has no taste for such inquiries. He reiterates with vehemence that Frederic violated all the doctrines of "the dismal science," but beyond this it does not please him to go. And we are not sure that he is right even thus far. Undoubtedly Frederic did not much understand or value Political Economy, but in the matter now before us it is by no means quite clear that political economists would have condemned all his proceedings. For example, at the close of the war he had in hand some twenty-five million thalers which he had got ready against the next campaign. These he spent himself, in the manner and at the places where necessity seemed most imperious. Now it is certainly a doctrine of Political Economy that private enterprise best develops the resources of a country. But there is not in this science more than in others any rule

without exceptions ; and the most rigid political economists will probably admit that crises may come in the history of a nation, when the interference of the Government may not only be harmless but salutary. Such a crisis in our own history was the Irish famine. Some writers carry this doctrine considerable lengths, maintaining, for instance, that Government may, with good effect, afford to the people facilities of locomotion, so as to enable them to take advantage of any local rise in wages. Indeed, strictly looked at, is a State system of emigration anything but carrying out this principle on a large scale ? The truth is, that the doctrines of economic science cannot be unbendingly applied to extraordinary conditions of society. Prussia, at the close of the war, was in a condition altogether extraordinary. Trade was annihilated, property insecure, the law weak, and the people consequently in that state in which a tendency to hoard money, instead of profitably employing it, must have been wide-spread. It may therefore be doubted whether Frederic's "paternal," or rather steward-like, system of government was not well adapted to the exigencies of the case. The question is most interesting, but we have no space to discuss it here—the rather that it is not opened by Mr. Carlyle. Instead of dealing with it he has chosen to indulge in such "inarticulate shriekings" against Political Economy and Free-Trade as we have quoted above. By this course he has done injustice at once to his readers and himself. His readers have lost much valuable political information ; and the life of Frederic has been written without any sufficient statement of Frederic's greatest and purest title to fame. For a detailed account of the means by which Frederic healed the wounds of the State, and of his administration during the last twenty-three years of peace which closed his reign, how willingly would we

exchange the prolix record of the early glories of the Hohenzollerns, the irritating defences of the extravagances of Frederic William, or even the minute descriptions of Frederic's marches and countermarches among the mountains of Bohemia. That Frederic was totally mistaken in the general principles of his administration is hardly disputable, but it by no means follows that he was mistaken in the measures he adopted under certain extraordinary circumstances; and history never could have discharged a more useful office than in pointing out the reasons of this distinction.

There can be no doubt that Frederic had at heart the wellbeing of his subjects. Immediately after his accession he announced his determination to "make men happy." That he sincerely laboured to carry out this determination cannot be denied. Unfortunately, like most men in all ranks and stations of life, he insisted on making others happy according to his views, not according to their own. It is a mistake not less serious than common. He believed he understood their real interests better than they did themselves; therefore they were not permitted to seek their wellbeing in their own way. His argument ran thus: I am wiser than my people, therefore they can only be truly happy if they obey my orders in all things; and so the whole population was drilled like so many soldiers—or almost slaves. Again, he thought it for the good of the country that his territory should be enlarged, and so the Seven Years' War was brought upon the people that Silesia might be obtained. That war cost Prussia some 200,000 men, not to speak of the sufferings of the survivors. Was the acquisition of Silesia sufficient to convert all this misery into a balance of happiness? Supposing Frederic had never gone near Silesia, but had preserved peace throughout his reign, devoted

himself to developing the resources of the country, and increasing the intelligence and extending the liberties of the people, would not the Prussians have been happier then, more prosperous and higher in the scale of nations now? Mr. Carlyle, as we have seen, defends the Silesian robbery. But even he cannot defend all Frederic's civil administration; yet he is never at a loss for an excuse to save his hero. When Frederic does anything wise, no one may share the credit with him; when he does anything very unwise, some one else, if possible a Frenchman, has to bear the blame. Thus, when he introduces a system of excise for which no good word can be said, the whole responsibility is laid upon the advice of D'Alembert and Helvetius.

Frederic's character is a strange study in human nature. He was often satirised; but he never fell into the hands of a satirist who could make the most of him. To an epigrammatic writer like Pope he would have been invaluable. The inconsistencies and contrasts in his nature are grotesque and puzzling. Mr. Carlyle's indiscriminating praise gives us no aid towards solving the riddle. This is mainly owing to his unfortunate predilection for Frederic William. He insists on defending the conduct of that drunken savage, whose best excuse, indeed, is, that he was often drunk for months together, if not quite mad; nay, in upholding him as a model father, whose judicious, if somewhat stern control was productive of the greatest benefit to his son. Now the real truth we suspect to have been that Frederic's whole nature was distorted and corrupted by the treatment of his youth. As a boy, he was "one of the prettiest, vividest little boys;" as he grew up he evinced an open, generous, and affectionate nature. But his love of literature and music, and a distaste for constant

drill, excited his father's wrath. To what lengths that wrath reached,—public blows, imprisonment, murder of his son's friend, almost the murder of his son himself, is well known. No mortal could pass through such an ordeal unscathed. None but rarely beautiful natures can come out of an unhappy home otherwise than hurt and marred. Frederic's home was more than usually unhappy, and the results of this were not trifling. Want of sympathy made him reserved; cruelty made him hard-hearted; stern repression made his nature break out into low practical joking. So far as we can now judge, he was naturally the very reverse of irreligious, and indeed he early showed a disposition towards serious thought. But his father stormed at him as a Calvinist and a Predestinarian; forced him, on pain of death, to relinquish these damnable heresies; and ended, as might have been anticipated, in making him a believer in nothing. Again, paternal love sought to exert itself in arranging a marriage for the prince, and, yielding to the suggestions of courtiers in Austrian pay, paternal love forced upon Frederic a wife whom he detested, and whom he hardly ever saw; condemning him to a life of loneliness, without the affection of a woman, or the hope of posterity. Worst of all was that fear taught deceit, the only protection of the weak. From that sad day on which Katte was led to death before his eyes, Frederic shrouded himself in a "polite cloak of darkness," to use Mr. Carlyle's elegant euphemism for a system of complete hypocrisy. It is painful to read of the Crown Prince kissing his father's dirty gaiters; but he had to stoop yet lower. His proud heart must have suffered many a bitter pang before he endured to write in terms of fawning affection to such a creature as Grumkow, the most contemptible of the knot of traitors and toadies, who,

under the intellectual reign of Mr. Carlyle's first hero, ruled the destinies of Prussia. That cloak of darkness, which then seemed to stand him in good stead, was never through life thrown aside, and leaves a shadow on his fame. Altogether apart from his faithlessness to his engagements, Frederic's attempts to deceive, or, in slang phraseology, to "humbug" his adversaries, were often so barefaced as to be quite ludicrous. Thus, at the very time when his armies were occupying the whole of Silesia, except a few fortified towns, he had the effrontery to write to the Duke of Lorraine, "My heart has no share in the mischief which my hand is doing to your Court."

Curiously enough, the domestic vices generally reappear in those who have suffered from them. Frederic had many of the faults of his father, only in a less degree. But they do not seem to have been his naturally; he acquired them from the teaching of example. By nature frank, generous, affectionate; cruel usage made him deceitful, harsh, unfeeling, implacable. "He is as hard," said Voltaire of him, as Churchill said of James II., "he is as hard as that marble table." In some points he greatly improved and softened as he grew older; he became more tolerant, more patient, more moderate. It would have been an instructive study to mark how many of his greatest faults were derived from a corrupting education, and how many of these faults age and experience removed. But this would have involved the admission of imperfection in his father, and even in himself; and neither admission is Mr. Carlyle prepared to make. Instead, therefore, of such a study of character, we have indiscriminating panegyric of both, neither interesting, nor philosophical, nor just.

An extravagant affection for the lower animals has often been found in men who cared very little for

their fellow-creatures. Frederic was a notable example of this; though the peculiarity is nowhere mentioned by Mr. Carlyle. He had always some half-dozen Italian greyhounds in the room with him; one the especial favourite, the rest kept to afford the favourite the pleasures of society. To one of these, called Alcmena, he was so attached, that at her death he was quite overpowered with grief, and insisted on keeping her corpse in his room long after it had become putrid. Dogs cost him less, he used to say, and were much more attached and faithful than a Marquise de Pompadour. A footman was appointed to the honour of attending on them, and a carriage was appropriated to their use, in which they went out for their airing, always occupying the hind seat. They were all buried on the terrace at Sans Souci, and in his will he left directions that he should be interred beside them.

Keen literary tastes were among the strange elements of Frederic's character. Beyond doubt he was possessed by an earnest and pure love of literature. Few kings have ever so loved literature for its own sake; many successful authors have striven less laboriously after literary success. He lay under the disadvantage of having the command of no language; and yet his prose writings have received the commendation of Gibbon. As to his verses, the less said of them the better; save, perhaps, the one remark, that Mr. Carlyle's argument, from their frequent and extreme indecency, to their author's innocence of the actual commission of those iniquities which have been laid to his charge, is not more ingenious than true to human nature.

A curious similarity may be remarked between the weaknesses and faults which marred the character of Frederic, and the weaknesses and faults which marred

the character of Richelieu. In both these great men there was the same love of small matters, and passion for minuteness of detail, which could not but be injurious to greater interests. In both there was the same love of literature, the same addiction to literary trifling. Both were penetrated with a profound scorn and distrust of their fellow-men; neither could resist a mocking humour which made enemies for the sake of a laugh; both derived enjoyment from humiliating and giving pain to others in the intercourse of social life.

Mr. Carlyle has avoided anything like a delineation of Frederic's character; but at the close of all he brings him strikingly before us in his greatest weakness and his greatest strength:—

“He well knew himself to be dying; but some think, expected that the end might be a little further off. There is a grand simplicity of stoicism in him; coming as if by nature, or by long *second-nature*; finely unconscious of itself, and finding nothing of peculiar in this new trial laid on it. From of old, Life has been infinitely contemptible to him. In death, I think, he has neither fear nor hope. Atheism, truly, he never could abide: to him, as to all of us, it was flatly inconceivable that intellect, moral emotion, could have been put into *him* by an Entity that had none of its own. But there, pretty much, his Theism seems to have stopped. Instinctively, too, he believed, no man more firmly, that Right alone has ultimately any strength in this world: ultimately, yes;—but for him and his poor brief interests, what good was it? Hope for himself in Divine Justice, in Divine Providence, I think he had not practically any; that the unfathomable Demiurgus should concern himself with such a set of paltry ill-given animalcules as oneself and mankind are, this also, as we have often noticed, is in the main incredible to him.

“A sad Creed, this of the King's;—he had to do his duty without fee or reward. Yes, reader;—and what is well worth your attention, you will have difficulty to find, in the

annals of any Creed, a King or man who stood more faithfully to his duty; and, till the last hour, alone concerned himself with doing that. To poor Friedrich that was all the Law and all the Prophets: and I much recommend you to surpass him, if you, by good luck, have a better copy of those inestimable Documents!—Inarticulate notions, fancies, transient aspirations, he might have, in the background of his mind. One day, sitting for a while out of doors, gazing into the Sun, he was heard to murmur, ‘Perhaps I shall be nearer thee soon:’—and indeed nobody knows what his thoughts were in these final months. There is traceable only a complete superiority to Fear and Hope; in parts, too, are half-glimpses of a great motionless interior lake of Sorrow, sadder than any tears or complainings, which are altogether wanting to it.”—Vol. vi. pp. 636-7.

Assuredly he possessed, if ever man did, fortitude —“the virtue of adversity,” the most heroic of all the virtues. The full force of his character was never shown till among the dangers and sorrows of the Seven Years’ War. He bore up against overwhelming calamities, and triumphed over them, and established himself in security. Few men ever sought less their own happiness and ease, ever worked harder in their vocation. He discharged, with calm endurance, the multifarious labours of his life of self-imposed toil, uncheered by hope, urged on by no fear, but ever loyal to his sense of duty. “The night cometh when no man can work.” As the night drew nigh, his weariness grew more intense, his loneliness yet deeper. One by one the companions of his prime, towards a few of whom he felt as much affection as his iron nature was capable of feeling, had fallen from his side; he had no love for any of his own family who then survived, save, perhaps, the Princess Amelia, and in her pitiable state she could only be to him an additional cause of sorrow; through life he had never sought affection, so now the solace of affection could not be his: friend-

less and hopeless, he met with serene courage the inevitable end. It is a picture from which we cannot withhold our reverence, but which fails to command our love. Had he been less be-praised we should have liked him better: the outrageous worship of his biographer affronts the reader, and alienates his sympathies.

The second great point of interest in this book is, as we have said, that it contains the completest exposition and illustration of Mr. Carlyle's views on government which the world has as yet received. We have dwelt so long on the character of Frederic that we must be brief on this matter. Generally, the world knows pretty well how Mr. Carlyle would have it governed, but the "Life of Frederic" leaves no doubt on the matter. Frederic's system is unreservedly commended; England, on the other hand, has only at rare intervals in her history been governed at all. Lord Chatham was—

"The one King England has had, this King of Four Years, since the Constitutional system set in. Oliver Cromwell, yes indeed,—but he died, and there was nothing for it but to hang his body on the gallows. Dutch William, too, might have been considerable,—but he was Dutch, and to us proved to be nothing. Then again, so long as Sarah Jennings held the Queen's Majesty in bondage, some gleams of Kinghood for us under Marlborough:—after whom Noodleism and Somnambulism, zero on the back of zero, and all our Affairs, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, jumbling at random, which we call the Career of Freedom, till Pitt stretched out his hand upon them. For four years; never again, he; never again one resembling him,—nor indeed can ever be." . . .

"No; Nature does not produce many Pitts:—nor will any Pitt ever again apply in Parliament for a career. 'Your voices, *your* most sweet voices; ye melodious torrents of

Gadarene Swine, galloping rapidly down steep places,—I, for one, know whither!’ * * —Enough.”—Vol. iv. pp. 556, 557.

Parliament, representation, a free press, these things on which we are wont to pride ourselves, are not only useless, they are utterly destructive and damnable. Indeed, as to the last, we are told with unusual distinctness that it cannot “answer very long among sane human creatures; and, indeed, in nations not in an exceptional case, it becomes impossible amazingly soon.” This, however, does not arise from indifference to his country. On the contrary, it springs from a keen jealousy for her honour. Mr. Carlyle never writes with more unaffected enthusiasm than when he is describing some gallant exploit of his countrymen. Hawke destroying the French fleet amid the storms of the Bay of Biscay and the dangers of an unknown shore, the column at Fontenoy, the horsemen who followed Granby at Warburg—none of these want their sacred poet. He seems ever on the watch for some exploit of British arms, eager to celebrate it. But, as a rule, it is only the men that he can praise. The officers he finds a sorry set. If they are without fear of death, they are also without knowledge of war. Trained soldiers laugh at them as “knowing absolutely nothing whatever” of their profession; and “this goes from the ensign up to the general.” In a word, they are nothing but “courageous poles with cocked hats,” which evil, as well as all others, comes from our constitutionalism, which prevents the recognition of heroes, and denies them scope when found. The only remedy is to renounce altogether our miserable system, and to throw the government of the country unreservedly into the hands of those who are worthy. Let us be ruled by “heroes,” and all will be well.

Now this high-sounding theory, whatever its merits, is by no means new. It is at least as old as Plato. Indeed it is a necessary result of speculations, which consider politics in an ethical point of view, which mix up politics with ethics. Plato's ideal statesman, as developed in the *Gorgias* and the *Republic*, is a minute and despotic teacher or trainer, fashioning all men after the pattern he thinks best. In his state only hero-philosophers are to bear sway. A chosen few have been gifted with that gold beyond price, which gives them the right to guide and govern men. On these few nature has bestowed the sad privilege of ruling, on others she imposes the obligation of obedience.¹ But then the difficulty is how these hero-rulers are to be secured. Plato faces the difficulty, and gives us the result in the social rules of the *Republic*. He does not shrink from putting plainly before us all the extraordinary social regulations requisite to carry out such a theory of government, the restraint and enforced uniformity to which it leads. But Mr. Carlyle does not face this difficulty at all. He preaches the duty of obedience to these rulers when they appear; he says, that because we have them not we are running down steep places like "Gadarene swine;" but he gives us no hint of how we are to get them. It is perhaps true, that of all forms of government, a wise and beneficent despotism may do most for the happiness of the people. But where are we to find this? We fear that few rulers of this stamp have ever existed, or are likely to exist among the sons of men. Certainly the examples which Mr. Carlyle has given from our own history are not calculated to recommend his theory. Cromwell, a great and sagacious prince, did all in his power that his government should not be despotic; great as

¹ "Republic," v. 474.

were the merits of William III., a care for the interests of the people of England was at no time the leading motive of his policy; and perilous would be the fortunes of a nation which lay at the mercy of the greedy, and traitorous, and all-capable Marlborough. Pitt's daring enthusiasm saved England in a dark and troublous hour; but Pitt's career, marred by many and grievous errors, shows nothing less than the wisdom and statesman-like sagacity which could safely be intrusted with uncontrolled power over the destinies of a nation. No second Pitt, says Mr. Carlyle, in a spirit of dismal prophecy, can ever save England again. But we are not told why. Pitt rose to power under constitutionalism; and under a phase of constitutionalism far less alive to the influence of genius than that under which we now live. If Mr. Carlyle would point out the influences which in our present state of society throw obstacles in the path of genius, he would do good service; for such influences there undoubtedly are. But he does no service by simply calling his fellow-countrymen swine—whether of the Gadarene or any other breed.

Now, in this difficulty as to the supply of heroes—the difficulty which Plato failed to solve, and which Mr. Carlyle has made no attempt to solve—what does it behove us to do? Are we to waste ourselves in a useless longing for them? or are we rather to entertain the belief that the true greatness of a nation consists in being able to do without them; that a people is then best governed when its institutions are such as allow of an open and easy expression of the national will,—when, in short, it can look for government, not to the accident of one man, but to the free exercise of the sense and knowledge of the intelligent community. It is the old story told in new and pompous words; the old controversy, constitutionalism

against despotism, which, in times of trouble, is always brought up to puzzle the unwary. But, looking beyond plentiful though vague expressions of scorn and disgust, what definite charges does Mr. Carlyle bring against constitutional governments? So far as we can make out, one only,—that they are badly served. Our statesmen are incapable; our diplomatists are ignorant; the men who lead our armies are “barbers’ poles.” And this, the greatest calamity which can befall a nation, is a necessity of a constitutional government:—

“But Votes, under pain of Death Official, are necessary to your poor Walpole: and votes, I hear, are still bidden for, and bought. You may buy them by money down (which is felony, and theft simple, against the poor Nation); or by preferments and appointments of the unmeritorious man,—which is felony double-distilled (far deadlier, though more refined), and theft most compound; theft, not of the poor Nation’s money, but of its soul and body so far, and of *all* its moneys and temporal and spiritual interests whatsoever; theft, you may say, of collops cut from its side, and poison put into its heart, poor Nation! Or again, you may buy, not of the Third Estate in such ways, but of the Fourth, or of the Fourth and Third together, in other still more felonious and deadly, though refined ways. By doing clap-traps, namely; letting off Parliamentary blue-lights, to awaken the Sleeping Swineries, and charm them into diapason for you,—what a music! Or, without claptrap or previous felony of your own, you may feloniously, in the pinch of things, make truce with the evident Demagogos, and Son of Nox and of Perdition, who has got ‘within those walls’ of yours, and is grown important to you by the Awakened Swineries, risen into alt, that follow him. Him you may, in your dire hunger of votes, consent to comply with; his Anarchies you will pass for him into ‘Laws,’ as you are pleased to term them;—instead of pointing to the whipping-post, and to his wicked long ears, which are so fit to be nailed there, and of sternly recommending silence,

which were the salutary thing.—Buying may be done in a great variety of ways. The question, How you buy? is not, on the moral side, an important one. Nay, as there is a beauty in going straight to the point, and by that course there is likely to be the minimum of mendacity for you, perhaps the direct money-method is a shade *less* damnable than any of the others since discovered ; while, in regard to practical damage resulting, it is of childlike harmlessness in comparison ! . . .

“ I am struck silent, looking at much that goes on under these stars;—and find that misappointment of your Captains, of your Exemplars and Guiding and Governing individuals, higher and lower, is a fatal business always; and that especially, as highest instance of it, which includes all the lower ones, this of solemnly calling Chief Captain, and King by the Grace of God, a gentleman who is *not* so (and seems to be so mainly by Malice of the Devil, and by the very great and nearly unforgiveable indifference of Mankind to resist the Devil in that particular province, for the present), is the deepest fountain of human wretchedness, and the head mendacity capable of being done !—.”—Vol. iii. pp. 374-5, 433.

Doubtless there is much truth in all this. It is especially true of the lower ranks of the public service. So far as regards these, England then was, and probably now is, worse served than any country in the world. We would especially recommend Mr. Carlyle's observations on this theme to those wiseacres who think that India can be best governed by any chance son of a Director, and regard it as a frightful hardship that diplomatists should be required to know French, and that soldiers should be expected to have mastered the arduous accomplishments of writing and spelling ; arguing that to insist on such advanced knowledge is absurd, because there have been eminent men who did not possess it; in other words, that because Frederic the Great never could spell, therefore every boy who can't

spell will make an excellent officer. In all professions and employments in England, rising merit is less encouraged by the Government than in any other country. This mal-administration of patronage is doubtless an evil, and it is an evil connected with our system of Parliamentary Government; yet we have our checks,—the vague check of public opinion, the more active check of her Majesty's opposition; and the latter of these is supposed to be pretty vigorous just at present.

The case against constitutionalism is not so clear as regards the higher offices. It cannot be said that here we are in any way worse than our neighbours. Mr. Carlyle often makes himself merry with our way of choosing a king to rule over us. It does sound comical enough our picking up a Hanoverian gentleman, who knew nothing about England and cared less, who could not even speak our language, and making him our chief and leader; first binding up tightly in constitutional restraints lest he might do us a mischief. But on the whole we prefer this system, with the results to which it leads, to the system of investing a dynasty of Bourbons or Hapsburgs with uncontrolled power, in the hope that by some wondrous concourse of atoms a hero may rise up among them. Again, as to our chief men under the king, we do not see that we are worse than others. Certainly, in the times Mr. Carlyle writes of, statesmen like the Pelhams and Bute, soldiers like Lord George Sackville from sulks or cowardice refusing to charge at Minden, or Howe fiddling in Philadelphia while America was slipping from the grasp of England, do not form a pleasant subject for contemplation, any more than the Aberdeen administration and Crimean War of our own day. Nay, the older time has rather the better of

it, in that they had at least the satisfaction of shooting an admiral, whereas our miscarriage ended in the ingenious device of a Chelsea inquiry for white-washing everybody, and in worrying almost to death the man to whose courage we were indebted for a knowledge of our shortcomings. Still, what nation fared better in the Seven Years' War? Not France, which put Marshal Soubise at the head of her armies, and was rewarded with the rout of Rossbach. Not Austria, which sent out Prince Karl five times to lead her armies to defeat, until at last Leuthen was too much even for her patience; which threw away her only chance of victory by depriving Loudon of his command because he had taken Schweidnitz—the most brilliant exploit of the war—without the knowledge of the Aulic Council or the Empress. Nay, not even Prussia; for merit had no chance of rising in an army officered by nobles alone. There is no harder matter than to secure that only those who are fit for high command should attain it. But in this particular neither reason nor history convinces us that constitutional governments are worse than despotic governments. We cannot see that Parliaments are more likely to be affected by favouritism, or any other corrupt influence, than kings and prostitutes. Surely George III. and Bute, with a Parliament, were better than Louis xv. and Madame de Pompadour without one. Corruption, both in the shape of bribery and of the promotion of incompetence, prevailed most when Parliaments were unreformed and public opinion weak.

He must be a confident critic who can animadvert on the works of a man of genius without any feeling of misgiving. Such feelings must be unusually fre-

quent and strong when it is thought right to dissent from, and even to condemn, the opinions of such a writer as Mr. Carlyle. We all owe him so much, that to do this seems not only presumptuous, but ungrateful. But it is precisely because his power is so great that his errors may not be passed over. *He* cannot escape on the plea of being harmless. A few years ago his influence was unbounded; and now, if less extensive, it is not less potent. To him we owe it (not to take meaner instances) that the deepest art critic England can show, and one of the greatest masters of the English language, has forsaken his true vocation, and become a fierce denouncer of imaginary evil, and a foolish prophet of woe to come. And this "Life of Frederic" is, we verily believe, more calculated to do mischief than anything Mr. Carlyle has written. It contains the fullest exposition of his views, and it carries out these views unflinchingly in practice. In composition, style, and arrangement, a falling off from his former self cannot fail to be remarked; but his humour is as rich, his power of description as brilliant as ever. It is in tone and sentiment that his deterioration is most painfully obvious. It may not greatly matter what any one may think of the man Frederic: he is beyond this world's foolish judgments. And it is no pleasure to dwell upon the faults which marred a character in so many points entitled to our respect. But while we shrink from rash condemnation or vulgar abuse of the man, we must not be blinded as to the real nature of his actions. It does matter very greatly that the verdicts of history should not be reversed, that evil should not be turned into good, at the bidding of genius; that men should not be persuaded that vigour and fortitude can compensate for rapacity and

faithlessness. And it does greatly matter also that men should not be driven into vague dissatisfaction with all things round them—alike with the religion they profess and the freedom they enjoy. Mr. Carlyle's denunciations, often very commonplace in themselves, command attention from the force and originality with which they are expressed ; and the contemptuous tone of his philosophy becomes popular because it appeals pleasantly to our self-conceit. But beyond this he affords no help ; no troubled and truth-seeking mind will find any guidance from him. A state of cheerless mockery or passionate discontent, leavened with a flattering sense of superiority to all mankind, such would be the perfected triumph of Mr. Carlyle's teaching. He can pull down, but he cannot build. He leads his votaries out into the wilderness, and leaves them to wander there alone. He stirs up doubt and discontent in their minds, and then abandons them to that unhallowed companionship. Happily we have nothing now to do with his tone on religious subjects. But he has in this work assaulted political morality, the recognised principles of Government, and the British Constitution. We refuse to cast aside any of these at his bidding ; and we believe that he will render no useless service who shall, however humbly, labour to show that morality must be observed in political affairs not less than in the common business of life ; that a despotic, meddling, "paternal" government represses the independent exertions of the people, and so obstructs their progress and hinders their wellbeing ; that the Constitution, in the perfecting of which so many great men have spent themselves, sparing not their goods, their comfort, or their lives—which so many generations of Englishmen have loved, and been wont to glory in—is not a thing of

naught, to be despised and rejected, to be disparaged and cast aside because of some slight defects or some temporary failure ; but a rich and noble inheritance, —as Comines called it centuries ago, “ a holy thing ;” a treasure of great price ; to be revered with exceeding reverence ; cherished, amended, but never slandered ; in a word, that this country, so far as we can see, is not hurrying to destruction, nor, so far as we can judge, is worthy of such a doom.

THE WRITINGS OF JOHN RUSKIN.¹

SOME fourteen years ago, the "North British Review" called attention to two very remarkable volumes on Art, which had shortly before appeared. They had, up to that time, been strangely neglected; and we then ventured to express our surprise that none of the more influential periodicals had noticed a work which was likely to produce an effect on all art criticism. These were the first and second volumes of "Modern Painters." They were not destined to be neglected long. They would not have been so even had they stood alone; but as Mr. Ruskin went on writing, it was speedily felt that an author of great original power was addressing the public, and one who, for good or for evil, would surely influence the men of his own time, and, it might be, also the men of the times which should succeed him.

At first, loud and harmonious was the chorus of

¹ 1. "Modern Painters." In Five Volumes. Smith, Elder, and Co.

2. "The Seven Lamps of Architecture."

3. "The Stones of Venice." In Three Volumes.

4. "Lectures on Architecture and Painting."

5. "The Two Paths."

6. "The Harbours of England."

7. "The Political Economy of Art."

8. "Selections from the Writings of John Ruskin, M.A. Oxon."

1861.—[Reprinted from the "North British Review," No. 71. February 1862.]

praise. Language the most exalted was freely used. Mr. Ruskin was not only recognised as an able and earnest art critic, but he was hailed as a great teacher and regenerator of the age. His denunciations were like the denunciations of the Hebrew prophets; his teaching was like the teaching of the evangelists. His services as a critic were forgotten beside those loftier functions which were readily conceded to him. He was extolled in terms which would have required some modification if applied to Pascal. Such adulation was enough to turn a wiser and steadier head than Mr. Ruskin's. A little praise is a good moral tonic, but exaggerated commendation will lead any man off his feet. Accordingly, faults—observable from the very first—grew upon him. His dogmatism and his intolerance increased. The inevitable reaction was thereby hastened and strengthened. An author who has risen to sudden popularity occupies a dizzy eminence. At one time or other, the public is sure to quarrel with its spoiled darling. There is great truth in the Eastern tale of the Sorceress, whose love lasted but fourteen days, then changing into deadly hatred. In Mr. Ruskin's case, the reaction was unusually vehement. There had always been some dissentients, who now saw that their time was come. His writings had made him many enemies, and they all took heart of grace when they saw the public wavering in its regard. Thunders began to mingle with the pæans, until at last the latter were altogether unheard. Waspish critics ran into extravagance of blame as wildly as they had before run into extravagance of praise. Articles appeared, rude, almost savage in their tone. The last paper, for example, which appeared on Mr. Ruskin in the "Quarterly Review" was conceived in a spirit utterly unbecoming. Not less so was a paper which appeared lately in a northern contemporary,

called "Mr. Dusky on Art," in which a great writer and a great subject were handled with a buffoonery which would be thought vulgar in a barrack-yard. For some of this, Mr. Ruskin has himself to blame. He is at times the most irritating of writers. But it is surely possible for Reviewers to rebuke his faults without imitating them. If we allow him to make us lose our tempers, we shall be unable to derive from his writings the instruction and the pleasure which they are so well calculated to afford.

The present time seems not inappropriate to an attempt to estimate fairly the services which Mr. Ruskin has rendered to literature and to art. During the years that have elapsed since he was first noticed in this journal, he has not been idle. The list of books which we have placed at the head of this article, represents an amount of literary labour which, we suspect, few men have accomplished in the same time. And yet the list is far from exhausting what Mr. Ruskin has done. Many of his best pamphlets are not included in it. He has been instant in season, and sometimes out of season, in urging his views on the public. And now he seems disposed to rest a while, or at least to stray into devious tracks, whither we will not follow. Political economy is not his forte. The series of papers in the "Cornhill Magazine," throughout which he laboured hard to destroy his reputation, were to our mind almost painful. It is no pleasure to see genius mistaking its powers, and rendering itself ridiculous. But the fact that Mr. Ruskin did think himself competent to write on such a subject, shows how sadly he has been led astray by his own self-confidence. Throughout his whole literary career we shall find evidences of the same fault.

Looking, then, at Mr. Ruskin's writings as a whole,

it is no flattery to say that he is the greatest writer on art in the English language—indeed, in any language ; but unqualified praise must there end. He has attempted to write on many things besides ; but on little else has he written well or truly. Eloquent and ingenious he always is ; but take him away from art, and he seems to us ignorant and delusive. To do him anything like justice, we must first look at him exclusively as the subtle critic of art, and the eloquent exponent of nature. It will be a less pleasing, but yet a necessary task, to see into what errors he runs himself, and would lead his readers, when he announces his opinions on metaphysics, literature, history, and society.

In carrying out such an inquiry, we shall do Mr. Ruskin no injustice if we confine our attention mainly to “Modern Painters.” It would be impossible within the limits of one article to criticise adequately and in detail all that he has written ; but in endeavouring to estimate roughly the general tendency of the whole, we may safely take “Modern Painters” as representative of the rest. It was his first book ; it is, beyond comparison, his greatest book. “The Stones of Venice” and “The Seven Lamps” have, indeed, an amazing beauty, and an exceeding wealth of information, peculiarly their own ; but they are based on the same principles of thinking as the original work. His many lectures and pamphlets are but expansions of these principles. The five magnificent volumes of “Modern Painters” contain all that is most markedly characteristic of the man.

In England art has been unfortunate in its literature. Till Mr. Ruskin wrote, most of our criticism was technical and external, dreary and unprofitable. The real principle whereby a picture should be judged—*i.e.* the quantity and quality of thought which it

expresses—was rarely recognised. There were a few exceptions to this prevailing barrenness. Conspicuous among these, is a charming little book, now too seldom seen, called the "Picture Galleries of England," by Hazlitt. Even there we may remark some defects,—arising perhaps from a limited range of observation, as, for instance, his insufficient estimate of Holbein; but, on the whole, there is more of the soul of criticism in these few pages than in any other work we know of, prior to the publication of "Modern Painters." Not less admirable are two essays by Charles Lamb, on "The Productions of Modern Art," and "The Genius and Character of Hogarth." In Wilkie's letters there is the same strain of thinking; nor, when true art criticism is spoken of, should some old papers in "Fraser's Magazine" be forgotten, which bore the now well-known signature of Michael Angelo Titmarsh. What good can be said of the academicians' lectures—of Barry and the fluent Opie, with their worship of the Caracci—or of the fanciful Fuseli? It may be our own fault, but neither do we find ourselves much instructed by Sir Joshua Reynolds, either in his lectures, or in his special criticisms on the great pictures of the Continent. He is always sound, so far as he goes; he is generous and hearty in his estimates, seeing the best of everything; but, partly from his own habit of mind, partly because our modern analysis was a stranger to his age, he seems to have rested at the outward form—never to have penetrated to the soul of art. Later critics—too proud to learn of Ruskin—have not much improved matters. Kugler is declamatory, and restlessly inquisitive after hidden meanings; Waagen is hard, unenthusiastic, and technical.

Much may be said both for and against technicalities. It were mere folly to denounce them altogether; but

after all, their main value consists in this, that they conduce to brevity. They are a sort of formulæ; and, like all formulæ, can only be understood by the initiated. Therefore their use should be confined to occasions when the initiated alone are addressed; in all writing intended for the unprofessional public, they should be carefully avoided. Their place can easily be supplied by two or three additional words of plain English; and prolixity is better than obscurity. We may be uncharitable, but we suspect that the inveterate use of them arises from a desire to seem learned. Now we have the less patience with this folly, because art has suffered from it severely. People have been led to believe that in order, not to judge of a picture, but even to understand the principles by which a picture should be judged, it is necessary to "get up" a whole vocabulary of hard words. Accordingly the public have turned away from the matter altogether, and have surrendered themselves to guides often unworthy. Since the days of Goldsmith, the art critic has been a good deal of a humbug: his trick, of course, being "to say the painter might have done better had he done his best, and to praise the works of Pietro Perugino." To this day, why are popular notices of pictures in our best papers expressed in a mysterious jargon? It is not so with their literary articles. In them ideas are conveyed in plain English; it is not thought necessary to obscure the meaning by hard grammatical terms. The public understand what is said, and are instructed by it. Hence they are able to form literary judgments for themselves, and they have confidence in these: but the public has little confidence in its judgments with regard to pictures. And, indeed, the less it has the better; because its judgments are formed upon no principle, and are

utterly worthless. But what is the reason of this? Not, surely, that a picture is harder to understand than a book. No; but the reason is rather this, that the public have never been taught to comprehend painting, because for years and years almost all criticism on pictures has been so expressed as to be quite unintelligible. To understand pictures is not easy; to criticise them worthily, is very hard; but neither difficulty is simplified by all ideas regarding them being communicated in an unknown tongue. The first great excellence which we admire in Mr. Ruskin, is his freedom from all this wretched affectation. He has written the most profound art criticism in the English language; and he has so written it, that any man of ordinary education can readily discern his meaning. This has not arisen from ignorance; on the contrary, here, as elsewhere, simplicity has flowed from knowledge. It certainly seems rather odd to notice, as a special merit in an author, the fact that he knows his subject. But the truth is, that with regard to this particular subject, such merit is by no means very common. It has been possessed by very few of the writers who are so fond of darkening what counsel they have by the use of long words. And, indeed, on any subject, knowledge such as Mr. Ruskin's is rare. We may dispute the soundness of his judgments; but we cannot dispute the extent and the accuracy of his knowledge. He has seen, we believe, every great picture in Europe, and he has studied each one with as much minuteness as if he had never seen any other. And at the same time, with an avoidance of pedantry which deserves high praise, he has confined his minuter criticism, so far as was possible, to well-known pictures—more particularly to works in the Dulwich and National Galleries. His readers are, therefore, the better able to comprehend him, while

at the same time they reap the benefit of his more extended experience. It is hardly necessary to say that such experience has not been gained without hard and constant labour. Writers who labour to depreciate Mr. Ruskin should pause with reverence, if they have any reverence in them, before such a passage as the following :—

“The winter was spent mainly in trying to get at the mind of Titian; not a light winter’s task; of which the issue, being in many ways very unexpected to me (the reader will find it partly told towards the close of this volume), necessitated my going in the spring to Berlin, to see Titian’s portrait of Lavinia there, and to Dresden to see the Tribute Money, the elder Lavinia, and girl in white, with the flag fan. Another portrait, at Dresden, of a lady in a dress of rose and gold, by me unheard-of before, and one of an admiral, at Munich, had like to have kept me in Germany all summer.”—“Modern Painters,” vol. v., Preface, p. viii.

Surely such a simple, unaffected picture of conscientious work must command our respect. The reward has been that, on art, Mr. Ruskin never speaks without authority. It is lamentable to think how many opinions he has expressed on other subjects, to the formation of which he has devoted no similar toil.

Nor are Mr. Ruskin’s qualifications limited to a knowledge of pictures. From his thorough knowledge of technical details, we might anticipate that he was himself an artist, as well as a great critic of art; and so, in truth, we find it to be. Never, we should think, before was book so written and so illustrated by one man. It would be, of course, unjust minutely to criticise Mr. Ruskin’s powers as an artist; because he uses those powers only to illustrate his teaching—his drawings are all in subordination to

his words. He has used them as means only—to bring out fully some excellence in Turner; to show some curious wonders of rock, or leaf, or moss; to catch some aspect, more lovely than common, of earth, or sea, or air. Yet the most inexperienced observer cannot fail to see proofs of a capacity which would have made him a great painter had he not been a great poet. Every one will mark his delicacy and accuracy of drawing, his deep feeling of colour, his laborious truth, and the thought which breathes through all. His drawings of Venice are grand in their light and shade, and bold even to audacity in their strict fidelity to fact. What sacredness, and awe, and tenderness of heavenly radiance in “The Rocks of Arona.” What strength of the hills is seen exultant in the “Buttresses of the Alps.” And, in a different style, how are our minds possessed by serenity and quiet enjoyment, as we look on “Peace,” and the “Moat of Nuremberg.” The patient and various labour of Mr. Ruskin is astonishing. He will accurately follow out the traceries of the richest architecture; he will render lovingly the markings of the smallest wild-flower; and then he passes, seemingly without effort, to the “Cloud Flocks” or the “Sunset on Monte Rosa.” Indeed his descriptions of the aspects of the sky are hardly more abounding in truth and beauty than his drawings of them. He is, what some wit called Turner, the very Prince of the Power of the Air. With equal truth he gives us the clouds sweeping in stormy grandeur; calmly floating, like angels’ wings, in the far distance of the higher heaven; clustering in gorgeous pomp around the sunset; lying dark against the fading orange of the evening sky. And in all this there is a quietness and freedom from exaggeration which does not always pervade Mr. Ruskin’s writings. There is, undoubtedly,

a literalness and want of abandonment in the drawings, which would be a drawback, but that it is appropriate to their position as illustrations. Their end is merely to enforce what is said ; and this they do plainly and forcibly, yet with exceeding beauty. The combination gives to Mr. Ruskin's books a completeness quite their own. The desire of the eye is fulfilled. By these drawings and etchings, Mr. Ruskin has not only made us understand his own writings better, but has done more for art than all the Art Unions that ever existed.

Next among Mr. Ruskin's qualifications for his task must be mentioned his wonderfully minute observation of nature. He has watched her in her every aspect : he is familiar with every detail of her working. And yet, with his careful noting of particulars, he has never lost sight of the poetry of nature as a whole. His is not the spirit of the botanist who pulls to pieces a weed in a ditch, blind to the expanse of beauty which lies spread out before him. Take, for instance, the conclusion of the chapter on the "Truth of Clouds," in vol. i. : the knowledge therein displayed, of the various effects of sky, must have cost years of study ; yet we are never allowed to dwell unduly on any detail, but are filled and exalted by the grandeur of the panorama which the power of real eloquence makes visible to the eye of the imagination—the procession of the clouds over the face of the heavens from early morning, through stormy noon, through evening in tempest, through the serenity of midnight, until sunrise comes round again. Not only does he love nature with exceeding love, but he invests her with personality, and half dreams that his love can be returned. Quaint, perhaps, but very beautiful, is his fancy that nature must have grieved over the neglect of mankind in the rude olden times.

“For in like manner the whole of Nature only shone hitherto for man between the tossing of helmet-crests; and sometimes I cannot but think of the trees of the earth as capable of a kind of sorrow, in that imperfect life of theirs, as they opened their innocent leaves in the warm spring-time, in vain for men; and all along the dells of England her beeches cast their dappled shade only where the outlaw drew his bow, and the king rode his careless chase; and by the sweet French rivers their long ranks of poplar waved in the twilight, only to show the flames of burning cities, on the horizon, through the tracery of their stems; amidst the fair defiles of the Apennines, the twisted olive trunks hid the ambushes of treachery; and on their valley meadows, day by day, the hills which were white at the dawn were washed with crimson at sunset.”—“Modern Painters,” vol. v. p. 5.

By how long an intercourse this sympathy with nature has been fostered, with what patient labour this knowledge of her secrets has been acquired, is shown by the chapter on the “Truth of Water,” in vol. i. We have there quotations given from diaries at Venice and at Geneva, in which the various phenomena of water are marked down and discussed—how a sky is reflected in blue, while the hulls of vessels on the same sea are reflected in pale sea-green, their orange masts reflected in the same colour, white and red stripes round their gunwales neglected by the water altogether—why one boat throws a shadow, and another throws no shadow at all. Unwearied observation, note-books filled with sketches of water-effects taken on the spot, with remarks on their peculiarities—such has been Mr. Ruskin’s way of working; and it is a way of working which entitles a man to speak with some decision. In his own words, his secret is “watchfulness, experience, affection, and trust in nature.” No other man living, we think, could have written the section on “Leaf Beauty” with

which the fifth volume opens. The following exquisite passage on pines exemplifies both the characteristics of which we have spoken—the observation, and the deep feeling :—

“Then note, further, their perfectness. The impression on most people’s minds must have been received more from pictures than reality, so far as I can judge ;—so ragged they think the pine ; whereas its chief character in health is green and full roundness. It stands compact, like one of its own cones, slightly curved on its sides, finished and quaint as a carved tree in some Elizabethan garden ; and instead of being wild in expression, forms the softest of all forest scenery ; for other trees show their trunks and twisting boughs : but the pine growing either in luxuriant mass or in happy isolation, allows no branch to be seen. Summit behind summit rise its pyramidal ranges, or down to the very grass sweep the circlets of its boughs ; so that there is nothing but green cone and green carpet. Nor is it only softer, but in one sense more cheerful than other foliage ; for it casts only a pyramidal shadow. Lowland forest arches overhead, and chequers the ground with darkness ; but the pine, growing in scattered groups, leaves the glades between emerald-bright. Its gloom is all its own ; narrowing into the sky, it lets the sunshine strike down to the dew. And if ever a superstitious feeling comes over me among the pine-glades, it is never tainted with the old German forest fear ; but is only a more solemn tone of the fairy enchantment that haunts our English meadows ; so that I have always called the prettiest pine-glade in Chamouni, ‘Fairies’ Hollow.’ It is in the glen beneath the steep ascent above Pont Pelissier, and may be reached by a little winding path which goes down from the top of the hill ; being, indeed, not truly a glen, but a broad ledge of moss and turf, leaning in a formidable precipice (which, however, the gentle branches hide) over the Arve. An almost isolated rock promontory, many-coloured, rises at the end of it. On the other sides it is bordered by cliffs, from which a little cascade falls, literally, down among the pines, for it is so light, shaking itself into mere showers of seed pearl in the sun, that the pines don’t know it from mist, and grow through it without minding. Underneath, there is only

the mossy silence, and above, for ever, the snow of the nameless Aiguille."—"Modern Painters," vol. v. pp. 84, 85.

Perfect familiarity with the best pictures, a thorough practical knowledge of art, clearly defined principles of truth and goodness, an understanding of nature probably unequalled—these qualifications go a long way to make a competent art critic. Mr. Ruskin adds to them a command of language which has certainly never been surpassed by any writer of English prose. Wielding such an instrument, he can adequately expound to readers all that his discerning eye can see in the great masterpieces of art. His power of interpreting pictures is astonishing. As a general rule, no writing is less effective than what is called word-painting. It is for the most part unsatisfactory—failing altogether to convey any adequate conception of the original. But it is not so in the hands of Mr. Ruskin. His fervid imagination enables him to realise, his abounding style enables him to express, the whole meaning of the painter. Not indeed perfectly, but yet in no small degree, the picture is brought before the reader. Such are the descriptions of "The Slave Ship," of the "Baptism" and of the "Crucifixion" by Tintoret, and of the "Massacre of the Innocents" by Raphael. We can imagine no more instructive task than to take a good engraving of any picture which Mr. Ruskin has thus handled, and to compare it carefully, point by point, with the eloquent interpretation. Any one who did this once or twice conscientiously, would thereby gain more real knowledge of art than by listlessly wandering round dozens of galleries. The instances we have alluded to have been often quoted before. We prefer to give, in illustration of what we have said, a few sentences by Mr. Ruskin on the St. Barbara and the St. Elisabeth in the Pinacothek of Munich:—

"I do not know, among the pictures of the great sacred schools, any at once so powerful, so simple, so pathetically expressive of the need of the heart that conceived them. Not ascetic, nor quaint, nor feverishly or fondly passionate, nor wrapt in withdrawn solemnities of thought. Only entirely true—entirely pure. No depth of glowing heaven beyond them, but the clear, sharp sweetness of the northern air : no splendour of rich colour, striving to adorn them with better brightness than that of the day : a gray glory, as of moonlight without mist, dwelling on face and fold of dress ;—all faultless fair. Creatures they are, humble by nature, not by self-condemnation ; merciful by habit, not by tearful impulse ; lofty without consciousness ; gentle without weakness ; wholly in this present world, doing its work calmly ; beautiful with all that holiest life can reach, yet already freed from all that holiest death can cast away."—"Cornhill Magazine," vol. i. p. 328.

His descriptions of scenery are not less celebrated. We select two, certainly, we think, among the best, and also interesting from the contrast. The first is a Highland, the second an Italian landscape.

"I was reading but the other day, in a book by a zealous, useful, and able Scotch clergyman, one of these rhapsodies, in which he described a scene in the Highlands to show (he said) the goodness of God. In this Highland scene there was nothing but sunshine, and fresh breezes, and bleating lambs, and clean tartans, and all manner of pleasantness. Now a Highland scene is, beyond dispute, pleasant enough in its own way ; but, looked close at, has its shadows. Here, for instance, is the very fact of one, as pretty as I can remember—having seen many. It is a little valley of soft turf, enclosed in its narrow oval by jutting rocks and broad flakes of nodding fern. From one side of it to the other winds, serpentine, a clear brown stream, drooping into quicker ripple as it reaches the end of the oval field, and then, first islanding a purple and white rock with an amber pool, it dashes away into a narrow fall of foam under a thicket of mountain-ash and alder. The autumn sun, low but clear, shines on the scarlet ash-berries and on the

golden birch-leaves, which, fallen here and there, when the breeze has not caught them, rest quiet in the crannies of the purple rock. Beside the rock, in the hollow under the thicket, the carcass of a ewe, drowned in the last flood, lies nearly bare to the bone, its white ribs protruding through the skin, raven-torn; and the rags of its wool still flickering from the branches that first stayed it as the stream swept it down. A little lower the current plunges, roaring, into a circular chasm like a well, surrounded on three sides by a chimney-like hollowness of polished rock, down which the foam slips in detached snow-flakes. Round the edges of the pool beneath, the water circles slowly, like black oil; a little butterfly lies on its back, its wings glued to one of the eddies, its limbs feebly quivering; a fish rises, and it is gone. Lower down the stream, I can just see over a knoll the green and damp turf roofs of four or five hovels, built at the edge of a morass, which is trodden by the cattle into a black Slough of Despond at their doors, and traversed by a few ill-set stepping-stones, with here and there a flat slab on the tops, where they have sunk out of sight; and at the turn of the brook I see a man fishing, with a boy and a dog—a picturesque and pretty group enough certainly, if they had not been there all day starving. I know them, and I know the dog's ribs also, which are nearly as bare as the dead ewe's; and the child's wasted shoulders, cutting his old tartan jacket through, so sharp are they."—"Modern Painters," vol. v. pp. 210, 211.

"Perhaps there is no more impressive scene on earth than the solitary extent of the Campagna of Rome under evening light. Let the reader imagine himself for a moment withdrawn from the sounds and motion of the living world, and sent forth alone into this wild and wasted plain. The earth yields and crumbles beneath his foot, tread he never so lightly, for its substance is white, hollow, and carious, like the dusty wreck of the bones of men. The long knotty grass waves and tosses feebly in the evening wind, and the shadows of its motion shake feverishly along the banks of ruin that lift themselves to the sunlight. Hillocks of mouldering earth heave around him, as if the dead beneath were struggling in their sleep; scattered blocks of black

stone, four-square, remnants of mighty edifices, not one left upon another, lie upon them to keep them down. A dull purple poisonous haze stretches level along the desert, veiling its spectral wrecks of massy ruins, on whose rents the red light rests, like dying fire on defiled altars. The blue ridge of the Alban Mount lifts itself against a solemn space of green, clear, quiet sky. Watch-towers of dark clouds stand steadfastly along the promontories of the Apennines. From the plain to the mountains, the shattered aqueducts, pier beyond pier, melt into the darkness, like shadowy and countless troops of funeral mourners, passing from a nation's grave."—"Modern Painters," vol. i., Preface, pp. 37, 38.

And, in a grander style than either, combining truth of teaching with truth of description :—

"Whatever beauty there may result from effects of light on foreground objects, from the dew of the grass, the flash of the cascade, the glitter of the birch trunk, or the fair daylight hues of darker things (and joyfulness there is in all of them), there is yet a light which the eye invariably seeks with a deeper feeling of the beautiful, the light of the declining or breaking day, and the flakes of scarlet cloud burning like watch-fires in the green sky of the horizon ; a deeper feeling, I say, not perhaps more acute, but having more of spiritual hope and longing, less of animal and present life, more manifest, invariably, in those of more serious and determined mind (I use the word serious, not as being opposed to cheerful, but to trivial and volatile), but, I think, marked and unfailing even in those of the least thoughtful dispositions. I am willing to let it rest on the determination of every reader, whether the pleasure which he has received from these effects of calm and luminous distance be not the most singular and memorable of which he has been conscious ; whether all that is dazzling in colour, perfect in form, gladdening in expression, be not of evanescent and shallow appealing, when compared with the still small voice of the level twilight behind purple hills, or the scarlet arch of dawn over the dark troublous-edged sea."—*Ib.*, vol. ii. p. 38.

Yet Mr. Ruskin's writing has faults, and serious

ones. When we first noticed "Modern Painters," we remarked "a tendency to overdo, a certain redundancy, an accumulation of words and images;" and we expressed a fear that these faults may go further. We are sorry to say that this fear proves to have been well founded. These faults have grown upon Mr. Ruskin, and that to a very painful degree. The Highland scene which we quoted above is to be found in the fifth volume of "Modern Painters;" but, with few exceptions, all the finest specimens of his writing are to be gathered from his earlier works. Latterly, his redundancy has become tedious; the disproportion of his style to his subjects almost ludicrous. Formerly, his eloquence was called forth only by the wonders of art, or the stupendous effects of nature; now, it is poured forth profusely and indiscriminately on all things. He writes of every subject in the same grandiose strain. No one can read his rhapsodies at the beginning of the fifth volume, about the "slow-fingered, constant-hearted lichens," the "sacrifices, gloriously sustained, of poor dying sprays," and "the gentle law of respect observed by the leaves of the aspen," without a strong feeling of the grotesque coming over him. They are far worse than even Wordsworth's overpraised lines:

"To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

We refrain from quoting them, for it is no pleasure to laugh at a man like Mr. Ruskin. But all this is very mischievous. There is more harm in it than any mere blemish in literary art. It is untrue. No man can live through the world concerning himself up to this pitch about lichens, and buds, and "dying sprays." He would become totally unfit for better duties if he did. Such exaggeration can only lead to

unreality ; and it leads Mr. Ruskin into unreality many and many a time. His style gallops off with him into the merest verbiage and incoherence. Magnificent as is the language in the chapter "On the Two Boyhoods," it is very much sound and fury, signifying vastly little. Even in the description of Venice, at the beginning, the ideas are completely obscured by the glory of the words. Like Tarpeia, they are crushed beneath the weight of ornament. The ear is filled with sound ; but no picture is presented to the mind. If the reader will contrast this passage with some of the descriptions in the earlier volumes,—as, for instance, with that of the Campagna, quoted above,—he will not fail, we think, to perceive the wide distinction between powerful representation and vague fine writing. And when we come to the following description of the world of Turner's boyhood, Cimmerian darkness falls upon us at least, utterly :—

"A goodly landscape this, for the lad to paint, and under a goodly light. Wide enough the light was, and clear ; no more Salvator's lurid chasm on jagged horizon, nor Durer's spotted rest of sunny gleam on hedgerow and field ; but light over all the world. Full shone now its awful globe, one pallid charnel-house,—a ball strewn bright with human ashes, glaring in poised sway beneath the sun, all blinding-white with death from pole to pole,—death, not of myriads of poor bodies only, but of will, and mercy, and conscience ; death, not once inflicted on the flesh, but daily fastening on the spirit ; death, not silent or patient, waiting his appointed hour, but voiceful, venomous ; death with the taunting word, and burning grasp, and infixed sting."—"Modern Painters," vol. v. p. 301.

Deep thinking and beautiful expression may, of course, be found even in volume v. ; for when did Mr. Ruskin write a whole volume without thinking deeply, and

expressing his thoughts beautifully? But, for the most part, the thought is shallow and exaggerated, and the style detestable. We could select passage after passage, harsh and uncouth, in which Carlyle has been feebly echoed. Nay, a hint seems occasionally to have been borrowed from Alexander Dumas or Mrs. Marsh; and short, ungainly sentences stand abruptly dotted over the page, trying to look emphatic. The whole thing is like an inflated and incoherent sermon. Such spasmodic writing, with the affected titles of the chapters, will, of course, be admired by the uneducated and the ignorant, but is quite unworthy of Mr. Ruskin. In short, this volume reminds us of nothing so much as those *Annals*, or "*Gift-Books*," in which beautiful engravings are accompanied, and made ridiculous, by the verses of *Ladies of Quality*.

We have hitherto been considering only Mr. Ruskin's qualifications as an art critic. So far as we have gone, these have appeared of the highest order. But defects not a few have been urged against him; and foremost among all the charges has ever been the charge of dogmatism. Now, at this particular time, we would readily forgive dogmatism much greater than that of Mr. Ruskin. In all branches of English literature, really sound criticism—a conscientious endeavour to see things as they are—is exceedingly rare. With regard to art, it is almost unknown; and the absurdity is, that the public seems to suppose that it has no application there. Nothing is more common than remarks of this sort: "It may or may not be a good picture, but I like it." Nor do people appear to be aware that, when they indulge in such observations, they are making fools of themselves. On the contrary, they really believe that there is no room for judgment as to pictures, but that they are to be

liked or disliked according to the dictates of mere caprice. Hence, for example, we have Frederika Bremer declaring Raphael's Madonnas "soulless and lifeless" compared with the large Murillo in the Louvre; and, still worse, Mrs. H. Beecher Stowe disparaging the Sistine Madonna. As if such opinions proved anything at all, except the ignorance and bad taste of those who entertain them. The vanity of Mrs. Stowe would, of course, think even her ignorance capable of enlightening the world on anything or everything; but Miss Bremer would never probably have said anything about this subject, had she not been led away by the prevailing idea that the world is bound to accept "likings" or "dislikings" as intelligent art criticism. It would be much better were it generally admitted that pictures form no exception to the rule, that people should only talk of what they understand; that a man like Mr. Ruskin has some principle of judgment according to which he can pronounce a picture to be good or bad; and that, when a man says he "likes" a bad picture, he makes himself as ridiculous as if he were to confess a preference of Festus to Paradise Lost. In the present state of matters, "there is something grateful in any *positive* opinion, as even weeds are useful that grow on a bank of sand." But Mr. Ruskin's opinions are more than merely positive. They are the results of knowledge; they are based on principle; and, therefore, we may well excuse the vehemence with which they are occasionally expressed. For there is a truth of the ideal which the imagination can be taught to reach; and if that truth is altogether lost sight of, art may indeed afford some sensuous pleasure, but all usefulness, all nobleness is gone. On the other hand, Mr. Ruskin cannot be defended in his trick of imputing motives. There he has no knowledge to guide

--no principles on which to rest. Instances abound in all his works. What right, for example, has he to say that, because Rembrandt has painted his wife and himself supping on a peacock and champagne, such was the painter's ideal of happiness? Still worse is it to denounce Rubens as "without any clearly perceptible traces of a soul;" and nothing can excuse the awful language used of Salvator ("Modern Painters," vol. v. pp. 241-2). Condemn paintings as may be fit; but to speak of one's fellow-men as "lost spirits" and "fallen souls," is perfectly appalling. What a contrast to all this is presented by the gentleness and generous appreciation of Sir Joshua Reynolds' criticism! How much truer, for example, as well as kinder, is the feeling of Hazlitt: "It is a consolation to us to meet with a fine Salvator. His is one of the great names in art; and it is among our sources of regret that we cannot always admire his works as we would do, from our respect to his reputation and our love of the man. Poor Salvator! he was unhappy in his lifetime; and it vexes us to think that we cannot make him amends by fancying him so great a painter as some others, whose fame was not their only inheritance."

Again, many exult mightily over Mr. Ruskin's inconsistency. One ingenious critic is very wroth because he complains, in his odd way, that "Modern Painters have not a proper sense of the value of Dirt; cottage children never appear but in freshly got-up caps and aprons, and white-handed beggars excite compassion in unexceptionable rags:" while elsewhere he blames Murillo for elaborately painting the dirt on little boys' feet. So, too, no man is more severe than Mr. Ruskin on violations of the laws of nature for the sake of effect; and yet, when on the canvas of Tintoret an angel wrapt in light casts a shadow before

over the objects of his wrath, Mr. Ruskin forgives the license, nay, pronounces it "beautiful in its application." In a similar spirit, he denounces the Pitti Magdalen as disgusting; and then again tells us that in that very picture Titian teaches a true and lofty lesson, having dared to "doubt a romantic fable and reject the narrowness of sentimental faith." Such instances might be easily multiplied. But they are not vital inconsistencies. Who that has ever been irritated by the offensive cleanliness of some modern artists will refuse to acknowledge the value of dirt? and who but an uncandid critic can fail to see that what Mr. Ruskin condemns in Murillo, is not that he has painted dirt, but that he has painted it obtrusively and unnecessarily? Who, again, will hesitate to admit that a profound genius may, for some great imaginative purpose, indulge in a license which to meaner men must be denied? Still less can we give up Mr. Ruskin as inconsistent in any evil sense, because his views as to particular artists have not been always the same. It does not, to our thinking, impair the value of his teaching, that in youth he admired, as he now thinks, too keenly, the power and sweep of Rubens¹—that the reaction from this led him at one time to reverence too exclusively the holy feeling of the early religious painters—that advancing years, and extended study, have taught him to comprehend the nobility of Venetian art. Such changes are not inconsistencies of opinion; they are growth of thought. They are not oscillations, but progressions. But it cannot be denied that Mr. Ruskin makes these changes—in themselves slight—assume proportions of

¹ If Mr. Ruskin would be restored to this his youthful, and, as we think, well-founded admiration, he should read a hearty and powerful estimate of the great Fleming in a "Roundabout Journey," in the first volume of the "Cornhill Magazine."

serious magnitude by the manner in which he expresses them. This is another of the mischiefs which are to be ascribed to his inflated style. Why should he have called the Pitti Magdalen "disgusting"? or why, because he admires the Venetians more than he once did, should he now assail Rubens in language utterly unbecoming? Any conscientious critic, who will take the trouble carefully to compare and candidly to reconcile Mr. Ruskin's statements, will be surprised to find how what at first sight seemed glaring inconsistencies, finally disappear. He will be hardly less surprised to find how often the appearance of inconsistency took its rise solely in vehemence of expression. Would that Mr. Ruskin would apply to his own style that word which he tells us should be "relieved out in deep letters of pure gold over the doors of every school of art"—the word Moderation.

Able critics have based this same accusation on deeper grounds. Mr. Ruskin, they say, is not only inconsistent in his judgment of pictures, and in his estimates of schools of art. That might be forgiven. But an abiding fault is, that his principles are absolutely contradictory. A writer in the "Revue des Deux Mondes" for August declares that, to any ordinary reader, "Modern Painters" will prove an insoluble enigma. In one page, the author is a realist of the School of Comte; in the next, he is an idealist, who might have learned from the lips of Plato. He attempts to reconcile these two extremes, and, in the attempt, falls into utter and irreconcilable confusion. Now, on the real point here at issue, it is the critic who is in fault. He maintains that the only truth possible in art is a "truth of sentiment,"—meaning, we presume, that the motive of every picture is to be the chance feeling or emotion of the artist—bearing, however, no relation to the reality of nature. Mr.

*nominalist
or realist*

Ruskin maintains that the truth of art is a truth of the imagination ; and that part of that truth consists in the manner in which the imagination of the artist has regarded reality in its working. On the one hand, the imagination must be conscious of its own ideality, or it becomes madness ; on the other, it must seek its materials from reality, or it becomes grotesque and meaningless. Thus, the highest motives of pictures must be combined with the strictest adherence to nature : any revelations of the unseen and eternal, within the power of art, can only be made when what is seen and known is faithfully represented. And thus, too, the lofty sphere which Mr. Ruskin claims for art, the lofty functions which he assigns to artists, are to be reconciled with his repeated injunctions to study actual facts—with what the French critic calls his realism.

Yet here, too, Mr. Ruskin has himself erred, and erred grievously. In working out a theory so subtle, there was need for the greatest precision both of thought and expression. Unfortunately, the Graduate of Oxford is not much given to either. Especially is he deficient in the power of consecutive reasoning. He is very fond of rebuking others for being illogical ; and writes of himself, with no apparent consciousness of doing anything odd : “Any error into which I may fall will not be an illogical deduction : I may mistake the meaning of a symbol, or the angle of a rock-cleavage, but not draw an inconsequent conclusion.” It’s the old story—“Wad some friend the giftie gie us,” etc. For it so happens that there never was a writer more destitute of the capacity for logical thinking than Mr. Ruskin. Assertion is his only wear. In all his lectures this is obvious, but in none more than in his lectures on the Economy of Art. And this natural inability is

increased by his faults of style. His redundancy of language effectually prevents him from carrying on clearly any line of argument. His faults of temper also aggravate this evil. Instead of coolly refuting an opposite view, he conjures up an opposing controversialist, and rushes off into sarcasm, into reproach, into fierce denunciation. He has, besides, a most unpleasant way of attempting to discuss a point, by asking a series of questions—a device probably intended to impart liveliness, but which, to our mind, only imparts obscurity. Thus, in vol. iii., ch. 10, he starts an inquiry as to the use of pictures compared with real landscape. No inquiry could be more interesting or more instructive, if clear and precise. But it is disfigured with questions, and abrupt transitions, and polemical episodes, till the reader comes to the end, wearied, perplexed, and indignant.

Worst of all is, that a want of arrangement and connection marks "Modern Painters" as a whole. To this Mr. Ruskin would, of course, reply, that the book has grown to its present size unexpectedly; that at first it was intended merely as a defence of Turner—as a reply to ignorant critics who failed to honour the great painter duly. But though we may admit this defence to be a good defence, it does not remove the blemish. The disproportion of the various parts is indeed accounted for, and that in a very natural way; but it still remains a blot on the completed work. In spite of it, the book will live; more than that: in spite of it, the book will mark an era in the history of art; but it is a drawback, and a grave one. It prevents these volumes from being, what they ought, and easily might have been, the development of a perfect philosophy of art criticism. We would not willingly descend to minute criticism on such a matter. But the whole of vol. ii. is an excrescence. Every line of

it, excepting possibly the four chapters on the Imagination, should have been worked up with other portions of the book. It is embarrassing to the most patient student to have principles thus separated from their application. Almost the same may be said of vol. iii. It is, in many respects, the most interesting and beautiful of all, but it does not cohere with the plan (if there ever was any plan) of the work. In vol. i. the ideas which are to be received from art were classified into ideas of Power, Imitation, Truth, Beauty, and Relation. Now ideas of Imitation are never treated of at all; ideas of Power are never treated of fully; ideas of Truth and Beauty are fully worked out; and we hear nothing of ideas of Relation, which involve "the noblest subjects of Art," till we come to the middle of vol. v., and are bewildered by those chapters with the wonderful titles which foolish people think very fine, but which no man of sense can read with patience.

This want of a sense of proportion is especially prejudicial to Mr. Ruskin as a critic of architecture. For architecture, beyond any other art, is concerned with ideas of symmetry and of relation—of subordination of the parts to the whole. No man can be a great architect—no man can be a great critic of architecture—in whose mind the feeling of proportion is not a commanding idea. In Mr. Ruskin's mind this feeling does not exist. He fails to keep the main purpose constantly before him; he runs off into disproportionate elaboration of details. Criticism like his leads to a style of architecture rich, and in a certain sense beautiful, but in which adaptation and completeness are both wanting. Buildings in this style—as, for instance, the New Museum at Oxford—are so elaborated in every particular, that the meaning and purpose of the whole is altogether

obscured. The ornament is indeed all vital ornament; but it is so studied that it becomes disproportionate, and throws the main object out of view.

We have already noticed Mr. Ruskin's prejudices and occasional injustice. His omissions affect us with not less surprise. Of course the answer to this is, to repeat that the book was not a treatise on painting, but a pamphlet in defence of Turner. But whatever may have been the original intention, "Modern Painters" has now grown to a size which entitles us to expect that there should be few serious omissions. It is impossible not to regret Mr. Ruskin's comparative silence on the Spanish school, and his entire neglect of the early Flemish painters. Nor is the list of notable English painters exhausted. Wilkie, though not strictly a landscape painter, surely deserved some notice; and still more unaccountable is the treatment of Linnell. That truly English painter is only mentioned twice—once in an appendix, and once in a foot-note. All who remember the beautiful Linnells in the Manchester Exhibition will wonder at this, and regret it. Mr. Ruskin's remarks on Linnell would have been most interesting and most instructive.

With all its faults and shortcomings, "Modern Painters" has done more for art than any one book in the English language. Mr. Ruskin began to write filled with noble aims. He was resolved on vindicating the fame of a great artist; and, as the best means of so doing, on expounding to the world the true glory of art. That glory he taught us to find not in mere dexterity and tricks of skill, but in reverently approaching the perfection of nature, and in declaring the external beauty of the universe. For immediate effect he did not hope; yet he cherished the expectation that "conviction would follow in due

time." His last volume breathes bitter disappointment :—"Once I could speak joyfully about beautiful things, thinking to be understood ; now I cannot any more, for it seems to me that no one regards them." We confess to a very different estimate of Mr. Ruskin's labours. To the painter he has given deep and true rules for the interpretation of nature : the public he has taught to judge of art by rational and intelligible standards. Much of Mr. Ruskin's advice to the painter has, of course, been given before. He has before been told that his first business is to learn to paint, though the invariable connection between the highest artistic merit and the greatest expressional power has never been so distinctly enforced as in Appendix 15 to vol. i. of "The Stones of Venice." He has before been told of the duty of finish ; but never was the duty so strictly inculcated as in the second and third volumes of "Modern Painters :"—"No truly great man can be named in the arts, but it was that of one who finished to his utmost." But the originality of Mr. Ruskin's criticism lies in this, that he insists on judging pictures by the amount of thought which they exhibit and convey :—"He is the greatest artist who has embodied, in the sum of his works, the greatest number of the greatest ideas." The perfect landscape, for example, is that which brings before the eye of the spectator some scene of nature, and at the same time guides his imagination to those thoughts and feelings which such a scene is calculated to excite. To accomplish this, there is requisite truth of imitation, and worthiness in the thing imitated. In treating this latter point, Mr. Ruskin has fallen foul of the Dutch and Flemish schools, and has excited much foolish indignation thereby.

Now all art—poetry and painting alike—is unques-

tionably, as Aristotle said long ago, imitation. But it is not imitation only. Something more than mere mimicry is demanded of it, and that something is the selection of worthy themes. Had Mr. Ruskin's writings established nothing more than this—that mere indiscriminating representation of external objects, however accurate, is nothing but a commonplace trick, no more deserving admiration than the antics of a monkey—he would have rendered an inestimable service to art. If ever his intolerance gains our sympathy, it is when he contemptuously leaves the admirers of the Flemish school “to count the spicula of hay-stacks, and the hairs of donkeys.” Why, in the name of all that is wonderful, should I admire, we may fancy a plain man exclaiming, pictures of cheeses, and pipes, and pots of beer, and “boors drinking”? I don't like boors in any circumstances. Withal, the concomitants so much affected by Dutch painters certainly do not improve them. I would go, our exasperated amateur continues, a very considerable distance out of my way in order to avoid boors drinking; and why, then, should similitudes of that unpleasing sight be stuck over my walls; and, above all, why should I be called on to think them very fine? Questions certainly hard to answer. It is, indeed, surprising what deep roots this fallacy has struck, and how long it has flourished. Pictures of pot-houses, and dung-hills, and scenes of debauchery, however true to the miserable facts they tell, and however brilliant in colouring, or skilful in composition, can claim no other admiration than that which we reluctantly accord to the indecencies of Byron or the witty profanities of Voltaire. Plato saw this long ago; and, as usual, shrinking from no extreme to which his theory led him, would have excluded even Homer from his ideal state, because the poet represented scenes and depicted

emotions so coarse and violent as to be unbecoming exemplars. Few would follow the philosopher quite so far; but his doctrine is right in the main. Not only the low and degraded aspects of life, but excess of misery, and the extremes of ignoble passion—danger, torture, and death, anger, and overmastering grief or terror, it were wise to eschew, unless, indeed, the theme be so set forth, that the mind is exalted by the contemplation of the divine mercy, or strengthened by the teaching of human love, or fortitude, or self-devotion. In short, while all must aim at truth, the rank of an artist is determined by the extent to which he aims at spiritual truth, and the truth of beauty.

“High art, therefore, consists neither in altering, nor in improving nature; but in seeking throughout nature for ‘whatsoever things are lovely, and whatsoever things are pure;’ in loving these, in displaying to the utmost of the painter’s power such loveliness as is in them, and directing the thoughts of others to them by winning art, or gentle emphasis. Of the degree in which this can be done, and in which it may be permitted to gather together, without falsifying, the finest forms or thoughts, so as to create a sort of perfect vision, we shall have to speak hereafter: at present, it is enough to remember that art (*cæteris paribus*) is great in exact proportion to the love of beauty shown by the painter, provided that love of beauty forfeit no atom of truth.” . . . “In this respect, schools of art become higher in exact proportion to the degree in which they apprehend and love the beautiful. Thus, Angelico, intensely loving all spiritual beauty, will be of the highest rank; and Paul Veronese and Correggio, intensely loving physical and corporeal beauty, of the second rank; and Albert Durer, Rubens, and in general the Northern artists, apparently insensible to beauty, and caring only for truth, whether shapely or not, of the third rank; and Teniers and Salvator, Caravaggio, and other such worshippers of the depraved, of no rank, or, as we said before, of a certain order in the abyss.”—“Modern Painters,” vol. iii. pp. 35, 36, 34.

At the same time, whatever be the object to be represented, it must, above all things, be represented faithfully. On no point has Mr. Ruskin laboured more than on the necessity for truth. It is, he says, "a bar at which all artists may be examined, and according to the rank they take in this examination will almost invariably be that which, if capable of appreciating them in every respect, we should be just in assigning them." His sarcasm is nowhere more successful than in exploding the "generalising" theory:—"If there were a creature in the foreground of a picture, of which he could not decide whether it were a pony or a pig, the critic of the 'Athenæum' would perhaps affirm it to be a generalisation of pony and pig, and consequently a high example of 'harmonious union, and simple effect.' But *I* should call it simple bad drawing." There can be no more reason why a man should paint a tree unlike any known existing tree, than why he should paint a beech-tree and call it an oak. The prominence which Mr. Ruskin has given to this topic, and the vehemence with which he has insisted on it, have exposed him, more than anything else, to the charge of inconsistency. But the charge is not, we think, well founded. If any reader will candidly compare chap. iv. of Part II. with chap. iv. of Part V., he will be able to work out an intelligible and consistent doctrine on this matter—though, like all Mr. Ruskin's doctrines, it might have been far more simply and shortly expressed.

Is, then, the artist a copyist only? Not so, any more than the poet. It will help us if we bear in mind that these arts are really alike, except that they use a different language. He who speaks to us in painting must speak truth not more or less, or otherwise, than he who speaks to us in words. The secret is given in a sentence—not the individual, but the

specific is to be aimed at. "Every herb, flower, and tree has a form to which it has a tendency to arrive;" and that is the ideal form of art. The duty of the artist, therefore, is not to alter nature, thinking to improve—that were presumption; but to understand, and, understanding, to interpret—to select scenes of beauty and instruction, and to impress that beauty and instruction on our minds. With this purpose and end, he may give us combinations which he has never seen exactly as he presents them—the artist is not a copyist; but he must study the harmony of the whole; he must observe unity of feeling in every part, and propriety in the relation which each part has to another, and all to the final result; he must avoid contradictions, and all things out of keeping; he must introduce nothing for the sake of its own immediate effect, which is so often done; in a word, he must not "make up" a so-called ideal landscape. Byron, who has so often and so truly interpreted painting through the medium of poetry, expresses the exact idea:—

"A green field is a sight which makes us pardon
The absence of that more sublime construction,
Which mixes up vines, olives, precipices,
Glaciers, volcanoes, oranges, and ices."

The creations of the artist may seem as of an ideal world, yet are only of the world around us, seen by his insight and explained by his art. Herein lies the genius of the painter: imagination is, in a sense, creative; painting is not photography. It is in insisting on the presence of this imperial faculty, in seeing clearly the relation between the mind of the artist and nature, in illustrating the scope and influence of the imagination over reality, that Mr. Ruskin's great merit consists. The necessity for the combina-

tion of truth with imaginative power is the key-note of Mr. Ruskin's criticism. In expounding this dualism, he exposes himself almost unavoidably to the blame of inconsistency. Sometimes he labours at the one branch of it, sometimes at the other; and by contrasting his dogmas on each occasion, an appearance of plausibility may be given to the charge. But such fault-finding is shallow and unfair. Taking Mr. Ruskin's writings as a whole, the candid student will easily find guidance in this puzzling question—will be taught how to reconcile the claims of truth with the freedom of genius. It is not allowable that the imagination should, as in Raphael's cartoon of "The Charge to Peter," substitute a cheerful Italian landscape, with convenient sheep, for the fire of coals on the desolate sea-shore,—should give us a stately band of all the Apostles, robed and curled, and dignified as Grecian sages, instead of the favoured seven, their raiments girt hastily round their naked limbs, wearied with the fruitless labours of the night, wet with struggling through the waters to meet their Lord upon the land,—in a word, should falsify and make unreal the scene at the Lake of Galilee, when our Saviour appeared to His disciples.¹ On the other hand, it is allowed to the imagination—seeking, with Tintoret, the essential truth and internal idea of the thing represented—to open out, in the Baptism, a wild distance of mysterious light, in the midst of which the figure of Christ is seen, in solitary supplication, borne into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil,—in the background of the Entombment, to recall to our minds the lowly scene of the Nativity by the roofing of a ruined cattle-shed; and the loneliness of the

¹ At the same time, it does not become Mr. Ruskin or any man, in speaking of Raphael, to use such language as "infinite monstrosity and hypocrisy."

life of sacrifice, by desert places in which the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man had not where to lay His head; and, lastly, in the "Crucifixion," that we may understand how disappointed pride hurried the Jewish people from the hosannahs of the entry into Jerusalem to the tumultuous fury of the judgment-seat of Pilate, "in the shadow behind the cross, a man, riding on an ass colt, looks back to the multitude, while he points with a rod to the Christ crucified. The ass is feeding on the remnants of withered palm-leaves."¹

No one, we think, can adequately estimate either Mr. Ruskin or his writings, who does not keep constantly in mind this his law or test whereby to judge of pictures, *i.e.* the thoughts which they convey and suggest. It proves his honesty, it explains his inconsistencies, it accounts for the enmity he has excited. It proves his honesty, because no man who was other than honest would have ventured to work out a theory so difficult and so dangerous. In this respect the constitution of Mr. Ruskin's mind is a great puzzle. He is, on occasion, sophistical beyond measure in thought and argument; he is never, we really believe, other than straightforward in his aims. He shows this by the courage with which he faces the real difficulties of every question which he discusses. Here in painting, for example, he has not shrouded himself in technicalities, or contented himself with external criticism. On the contrary, he can boast with truth that "every principle which I have stated is traced to some vital and spiritual fact." So, too, in architecture, his point of judgment is a comparison of the influences of the various schools on the mind of the workman—a position which leads him into endless trouble;

¹ "Modern Painters," vol. ii. p. 174.

and even his papers on Political Economy in the "Cornhill" possess this merit, that they at least attempt to solve the apparent contradiction between the selfish maxims of the science and the higher feelings of human nature. His earnest wish for truth forces him to encounter these subtle themes; but his courage makes him unconscious of paradox, and his illogical habits of mind lead him into the wildest regions of sophism and self-contradiction. Thus, in the present case, the endeavour to work out his law or test of painting is the true cause of the seeming inconsistency of his judgments. When things so very doubtful as thought or feeling are the grounds of judgment, the judgments can scarcely be uniform. It is so hard to trace them on any steadfast principle, to mark with certainty their presence or their absence. So much, too, depends on ourselves. In some instances, we may supply them when they were wanting; in other instances, they may abound and yet be undiscerned by us. And this difficulty is increased by the fact, that many painters never painted with this test present to their minds. Not a few even of the great names in art never troubled themselves about it. And it is not easy, where all other excellence is found, to detect and condemn the absence of feeling. Let no one doubt but that it is the true test of excellence, in painting as in all other art; but it is not the less a test most difficult to apply. Charles Lamb, as we before observed, was one of the few former critics who penetrated to the heart and sentiment of a picture. We have already alluded to his two essays: in the same spirit are the following lines on a portrait by Titian, which had succeeded a more worthy portrait by Leonardo:—

"Who art thou, fair one, who usurp'st the place
Of Blanch, the lady of the matchless grace?"

Come, fair and pretty, tell to me,
Who, in thy lifetime, thou might'st be.
Thou pretty art and fair,
But with the Lady Blanch thou never must compare.
No need for Blanch her history to tell;
Whoever saw her face, they there did read it well.
But when I look on thee, I only know
There lived a pretty maid some hundred years ago."

Let us not, however, be misunderstood. We do not mean to say, and Mr. Ruskin never meant to say, that painting, viewed merely as an art, has no excellence peculiarly its own. Undoubtedly it has such an excellence: the goodness or the badness of the vehicle of our thought is a matter of no slight moment. But we do mean to say that this excellence is an excellence of expression—of language only. In its highest development, it is almost always combined with excellence of the thought expressed or spoken. But when it falls short of this, it is foolishness and emptiness. It may be beautiful exceedingly—it may be rich in gorgeous colouring, and lovely with all the loveliness of effective light and shadow; but if "the little bright drop from the soul" be absent, it is not the highest art. To take poetry once more as an illustration: it cannot be denied that rhythm, and music, and felicity of expression are charms of no common power. But, like mere personal beauty, such charms are faint and fleeting, unless they come from the heart and go to the heart. No poetry dwells in the mind which possesses external perfection only. On the other hand, when the heart is caught by the feeling of the poem, howsoever simple the words may be, as in Scott's "Proud Maisie," the charm endures for ever. Compare, too, on this point, portrait-painting and photography. The photographer catches only the external appearance of a single moment. The

portrait-painter, if he be equal to his art, must accomplish far more. He must reach to the character and real essence of the man, and make that appear in the outward similitude; even although that appearance may be rare, though he himself may have never seen it worn. He must not paint a face merely; he must represent a human being. As in Leonardo's portrait, there must be "no need for Blanch her history to tell." So, too, the landscape-painter may paint a scene on which, in all its details, his visible eye has never gazed, but which the inner eye of the imagination has revealed to him as true to the reality of nature. Sculpture, the most ideal of all the arts, affords yet another illustration. The sculptor must speak with faltering lips, and with a half-utterance which we often fail to hear. There is less beauty and perfectness in his language as such, than in the language of any other art. It is apt to be obscure, may be quite meaningless, and when it is so, possessing no loveliness in itself at all. Exquisite may be the proportions of the marble; but if the soul is wanting, the rest is a small matter. Kenyon's bust of Donatello possessed, to those who caught its meaning, a far deeper attraction than the Faun of Praxiteles. When truth and thought do speak clearly through the imperfect medium, they come to our imagination with a power and an appealing unrivalled by the other arts. Sculpture attains an ideality altogether its own when it achieves its highest triumphs—when even in the *ὁμμάτων ἀχηνία* nature and life shine visible, though love may stray unsatisfied. The same holds good with music. The "concord of sweet sounds" is not enough—something more should charm than melody pleasant to the ear. All music, worthy of the name, bears the impress of the feelings which inspired the composer; and thus it is that the works of the great masters—

especially, for example, Beethoven—impart a pleasure, far higher and purer than can be derived from any gratification of an outward sense. In short, the great painter, to quote Reynolds—not generally a profound or analytical critic—must labour to express an “idea subsisting only in the mind: the sight never beheld it, nor has the hand expressed it; it is an idea residing in the breast of the artist, which he is always labouring to impart, and which he dies at last without imparting.”

We have said that this high standard of criticism, insisted on by Mr. Ruskin, accounts for much of the enmity which has been excited against him. The reason of this is perfectly obvious. If power of thought and vigour of imagination are required to make an artist, artists will be few. Now it is a melancholy fact that there are more second-rate painters than second-rate anything else in the world, except, perhaps, second-rate wines. Whole hosts of worthy men, doubtless perfectly well adapted to the ordinary pursuits of life, are encouraged by Art Unions to cover canvas with inane combinations of bad colouring which they call pictures, and are in consequence deluded into the belief that they are men of genius, and that Charles v., were he now alive, would think it an honour to pick up their palette-brush, as he did the brush of Titian. In the productions of these men there are no traces of thought, because they are incapable of thinking; and they are, not unnaturally, impatient of a canon of criticism which exposes their deficiencies. Mr. Ruskin has done no better service than the exposure of such foolish pretension. “The gems alone of thought and fancy,” says Mill, “are worth setting with the finished and elaborate workmanship of verse; and even of them, only those whose effect is heightened by it.”

Dr. Arnold used to say there was no waste of time so great as that of reading second-rate poetry, and disapproved even of schoolboys being drilled over Tibullus and Propertius. What is true of poetry is not less true of painting. Second-rate painters do no good to the world, and do much harm to themselves. The specimens of hopeless mediocrity which are yearly multiplied on the walls of our Exhibitions are a melancholy spectacle. They afford no amusement, neither can they elevate the mind or improve the taste. They are but examples of energies, which surely might have been good for some purpose, utterly wasted—devoted to a pursuit which can never reward them, save by ministering to a foolish vanity. If a man be not really a true genius, he had better never seek to rise above scene-painting.

Mr. Ruskin's writings have done more for us than give us conclusions and estimates ; they have fulfilled the true end of criticism in this, that they have taught us to think rightly on artistic subjects. Nor should we forget to mention, what Mr. Ruskin himself would regard their chiefest glory, that they have taught us to value and understand the greatest of English painters. It was Bayle, we think, who said of Scaliger, that "his learning and talents were too great for a good commentator ; the one making him discover in authors more hidden sense than they possessed, the other leading him to perceive a thousand allusions which had never been designed." The remark, though paradoxical, has much truth, and is eminently applicable to Ruskin on Turner. On the other hand, no one has any love for art who does not read in pictures or statues far more than is actually expressed. They must be looked on with the eye of faith, as well as with the faculty of appreciation. In proportion to the grandeur and the beauty of the conception of the

artist, must be the self-surrender of the gazer, must be his readiness to bring all his sensibility and imagination to complete and perfect the idea which the imperfection of the painter's language can but dimly shadow forth. The best artists are the most suggestive; and he is a bold critic who will venture to limit the suggestiveness of Turner. To measure his genius is like attempting to measure the genius of Shakespeare. Hallam, with his usual calm, clear criticism, says of our great dramatist, that "no man ever had at once so much strength and so much variety of imagination." The same words may be applied to our great painter. His artist-life seems to us marked by three stages of progress. The first stage is when he is a patient and humble student of other artists and of nature,—his "noble and puissant" imagination is "mewing its mighty youth." This early time is marked, especially in his water-colours, by sweetness, solemnity, and peace. Then came the second stage—the period of his middle life, when his genius had attained bold independence—the days of his golden prime, when we see him "soaring with supreme dominion through the azure depths of air," when he realised the infinity of space—the days of the Bay of Baïæ and of the Old Temeraire, of the horrors of his shipwrecks, and of the glowing beauty of the sunny fields of France and the mountain glories of Switzerland. And at last came to him, as to all men, the inevitable decay, when this great light went down in wild and wasted splendour. Mr. Ruskin will of course think us very commonplace; but we really do not see how this is explained by saying that Turner "died without hope" (whatever that may mean); or that England, "the Iron-hearted," killed him, as she had killed Byron and Keats. Whatever may be thought of the treatment these poets received from

their country, there can, we think, be little doubt of this, that the genius of no man was ever more appreciated in his lifetime, or more tangibly rewarded, than the genius of Turner, except perhaps the genius of Scott—whom, to be sure, Mr. Ruskin includes in his dolorous list of great men who have died heart-broken by the cruel neglect of their country. We believe the cause to have been merely the decay of his physical powers. And even in these works of the time of decay there is the old glory, though obscured. But in the works of the fulness of his strength there is a boundless prodigality of thought, which distinguishes them from all other pictures. As we look, one thing after another comes out and reveals itself, just as in nature ; and one idea after another is awakened in the mind, exactly in the same way as when we look on some surpassing landscape. It is idle criticism to limit the suggestiveness of the works of a man of genius by his own conscious meaning. For is it not true that the highest genius is, like prophecy, in a great measure unconscious of itself ? People go about repeating the cuckoo-cry, "Oh, Turner himself said that Mr. Ruskin saw things in his pictures he had never meant." And why not ? That very power of vision is itself genius ; and why should Mr. Ruskin be hindered from its use, or from teaching us to understand it ? When we look on Turner's scenes of beauty, bathed in sunshine—his glittering lagunes of Venice, foaming English seas, and fairy sunsets,—why should we be forced to restrict our thoughts to what was actually before the mind of the painter ? No one supposes that Shakespeare wrote with a full and adequate conception of his meaning ; and Shakespeare is not more indisputably the first of dramatists than Turner is the first of landscape-painters.

What now remains of our task is less pleasant ; for we have to speak of Mr. Ruskin as a writer on other matters than upon art, and it is impossible to do this without fault-finding. He tells us, with a sort of self-gratulation, that his work is broken by digressions respecting social questions, which had for him “an interest tenfold greater than the work he had been forced into undertaking.” He digresses not only into social questions ; but into questions of metaphysics, of literature, and of politics, unfortunately for his reputation. It is not too much to say, that in handling these matters Mr. Ruskin has succeeded in giving his enemies an easy triumph, and causing sorrow and shame to his sincere admirers. He is seldom right except by chance ; and that chance is very rare. Here all his faults as a writer become painfully apparent. For his dogmatism is now the dogmatism of ignorance ; his inconsistencies are the inconsistencies of caprice ; his intolerance is the intolerance of arrogance. Few things, perhaps, test better the value of a man’s opinion on any subject than his familiarity with its details. Mr. Ruskin is never impatient of the minutest point in art or nature ; in all other things accuracy is held of no account. Thus, he writes on political economy, and lectures on the economy of art ; and yet he tells us that he never read any work on economical science save Adam Smith, and for the reason, that all the rest go too deeply into details.¹ Nor is this the worst. His language regarding some of the great names in art, though sometimes bad enough, was always justifiable by some show of reason ; but nothing can excuse the following sneer at the fame of Newton :—“I hear of a wonderful solution of nettles, or other unlovely herb, which is green when shallow, red when deep.

¹ “Lectures on the Economy of Art.”

Perhaps some day, as the motion of the heavenly bodies by the help of an apple, their light by the help of a nettle, may be explained to mankind.”¹ Of metaphysics—that is, of everybody’s metaphysics but his own—he seems to think as lightly as he does of science. His own metaphysics, as explained in vol. ii., are a sort of Aristotle and water. The value of his literary judgments may be estimated by what he tells us of his literary instructors. In the third appendix to the third volume he tells us he owes most to Wordsworth, Carlyle, and Helps. Mr. Helps is a very painstaking writer, and sometimes shows considerable ingenuity in making ordinary ideas appear imposing; but really his name in this society does remind us of the fly in amber. As Mr. Ruskin advances, or, as we venture to think, deteriorates, Mr. Helps changes his position. He becomes himself the leading spirit. In a note to page 288 of the fifth volume, we find:—“I had hoped, before concluding this book, to have given it a higher value by extracts from the works which have chiefly helped or guided me, especially from the writings of Helps, Lowell, and the Rev. A. J. Scott. But if I were to begin making such extracts, I find that I should not know, either in justice or affection, how to end.” But though Carlyle is discarded, traces of Carlyleism linger long. Even in the fifth volume we have many passages which look like intentional caricatures of that author’s faults. The following has numerous parallels:—“The public remonstrated loudly in the cause of Python: he had been so yellow, quiet, and pleasant a creature; what meant these azure-shafted arrows, this sudden glare into darkness, this Iris message;—Thaumantian—miracle-working; scattering our slumber down in Cocytus?” Mr. Ruskin may take our word for it, the British public never

¹ “Modern Painters,” vol. v. p. 110.

remonstrated, on this or any other subject, in such very unintelligible language.

We cannot wonder at any literary eccentricities on the part of a man who has made for himself such gods. Sir Walter Scott is perhaps the only author whom Mr. Ruskin fairly estimates. But this arises, we suspect, only from Scott's love of nature. That it is not based upon any principle of literary judgment, is shown conclusively by his instancing, as rival specimens of the perfect play of the imagination, Ariel, Titania, and the White Lady of Avenel¹—that vulgar and most unspiritual spirit, admitted by Scott himself to have been a hopeless failure. The same capricious taste prefers Cary's Dante to our own Milton;² and quotes to us, as "rivalless" in pathos and tenderness of heart, such characters as Virginia and Fleur de Marie.³ As to "Paul and Virginia," we will only quote Carlyle's "What a world of prurient corruption lies visible in that super-sublime of modesty!" But, as for the other, it is with astonishment that we see Mr. Ruskin selecting for praise any character in the "Mysteries of Paris,"—a book beside which the broad indecencies of Paul de Kock seem virtuous. Nor are Mr. Ruskin's inconsistencies on literary points less extraordinary than his capricious judgments. In one place he condemns Keats as "sickly;" and in another he says that he has "come to such a pass of admiration for him, that he dare not read him." In his third volume of "Modern Painters" he tells us that Shakespeare's view of Fate "closely resembled that of the ancients;" and in his fifth he draws an elaborate contrast between the two—developing the astounding theory, that Shakespeare's tragedy is but the sport of Fortune ending in darkness and final death; while,

¹ "Modern Painters," vol. iii. p. 98.

² "Stones of Venice," vol. ii. p. 264.

³ "Modern Painters," vol. iii. p. 302.

“at the close of a Greek tragedy, there are far-off sounds of a divine triumph, and a glory as of resurrection.” So, too, we are told in vol. v. of “Modern Painters” that the Homeric temper is “tender, and practical, and cheerful;” and but a few pages farther on, we read of “the deep horror which vexed the soul of Æschylus or Homer.” Indeed, on all questions of ancient literature, Mr. Ruskin exhibits his faults as a writer in painful prominence. He is for ever dogmatising about Greek and the Greeks; while it is perfectly obvious that he knows little or nothing either of their nature or their language. His telling us to conceive of the Greek mind, by taking as its type “a good, conscientious, but illiterate, Scotch Presbyterian Border farmer of a century or two back,” is one of the most ludicrous things in literature. He gives Homer as the best representative of the Greek nature; which is precisely what Homer is not, and from the scope of his genius could not possibly have been. He never even alludes to Thucydides or Sophocles, the two most purely classical of all Greek authors. He admires Plato, without understanding him; and when he mentions Aristotle, it is to pass upon him the preposterous criticism, that he is “forced, false, confused; and has given rise to inaccurate habits of thought, and forced love of systematising.”¹ Throughout the fifth volume—especially towards the close of it—he interprets the old Greek mythology into subtle meanings, after the fashion of the later Greek schools—a fashion all sound criticism has long ago rejected. The theory which would explain the early mythology of Greece by making it symbolical of moral or philosophical truths, is as absurd as the theory which would ascribe it to the inventive genius of Homer and Hesiod. The mythopœic age was neither conscious nor artificial. Mythology in its

¹ “Stones of Venice,” vol. ii. pp. 3, 19.

origin was altogether material, connected with place, derived from language and from the impressions of external nature. To invest it, in its beginnings, with a conscious moral teaching, is to falsify its real character, and destroy all its value as the strangest phenomenon in the history of the human mind.

Mr. Ruskin's historical and political opinions are not less singular. Venice is, beyond all others, the country of his love. "Deep-hearted, majestic, terrible as the sea—the men of Venice moved in sway of pomp and war; pure as her pillars of alabaster stood her mothers and maidens; from foot to brow all noble, walked her knights." Such are his grandiloquent words. The plain fact is, that from the first foundation of the state down to her later days, when she deserted the allies whose succour she had implored, and made a shameful peace with the Turks even after the great victory of Lepanto, the history of Venice is the unvarying record of a policy of ungenerous self-seeking. Sparta, the Venice of the ancient world, grasping, and jealous, and treacherous as she was, could yet boast the glory of Thermopylæ, and was rich in the virtues of Brasidas and Kallicratides. But the Queen of the Adriatic, through twelve hundred years of prosperity and power, can point to not one heroic name—has left the memory of not one noble action. A haughty and implacable oligarchy oppressed the people, murdered their best Doges, and performed their proudest exploit when they sacked the sacred Capitol which all Christendom was leagued together to defend. A nation with such a history fell unregretted. No heart pitied, no hand was raised to succour, when Venice was cast from her high estate by the confederates of Cambray. And it is very characteristic of Mr. Ruskin, that, as he reverences the old government of that

"Den of drunkards with the blood of princes,"

so he sympathises with her oppressors now. His deliberate verdict on the Austrian government in Italy is, that he "never heard a single definite ground of complaint against it—never saw any instance of oppression, but several of much kindness and consideration."¹ Nor is this to be wondered at; for he never seems to regard the wishes of the people—to allow them freedom of thought, or independence of life. His whole theory of government is that of minute and constant supervision—the people drilled and trained into education² certainly, but, above all, into unhesitating and unintelligent obedience. Freedom of action, and the strength of character, the patriotism, the loyalty, and the thousand civic virtues which freedom of action fosters, find no place in his system. And in perfect keeping with all this, is his selfish aristocratic way of regarding the people, if any real equality is claimed for them. He will gladly concede them favours—and favours far beyond their wishes or their power to use; yet he will not accord them their rights. He regards them as a Roman senator of the best type would have regarded them, with toleration, even with indulgence; if so only they will be quiet and obey, not seeking for power, not intruding on the tasteful enjoyments of their superiors. Even the beauties of nature must be reserved for the educated appreciation of the few, uninjured by the noisy presence of the uncultivated many. Thus he bewails the bridges over the Fall of Schaffhausen, and round the Clarens shore of the Lake of Geneva, because they "have destroyed the power of two pieces of scenery of which nothing

¹ "Stones of Venice," vol. iii. Book III.

² And what an education! In addition to reading, writing, etc., every child should be taught "the first principles of natural history, physiology, and medicine; also to sing perfectly, so far as it has any capacity, and to draw any definite form accurately, to any scale."—"Modern Painters," vol. v. p. 333, note.

can ever supply the place, in appeal to the higher ranks of European mind ;” and, in the same spirit, he lauds Wordsworth’s poetical crusades against railways, as a noble attempt to defend a district from “the offence and foulness of mercenary uses.” Now in all this we can see nothing but selfishness. To make railways from large towns into the regions of lake and mountain, seems to us the very reverse of “a mercenary use” of nature. Rather is nature thereby enabled to accomplish fully the best use possible to her—that of refreshing and elevating the mass of mankind. Men and women are not to remain throughout life pent up in lanes and alleys, sighing vainly for “the meadow’s sweet breath,” in order that artists and poets may gaze on nature’s beauties undisfigured by railway bridges. And in the endeavour to veil the selfish cruelty of such a position, these men of taste abuse the lanes and alleys, and the manufactures which create them. But they begin at the wrong end. They cry out for impossibilities ; and lament the state of the country because their own pleasures cannot be preserved. All their eloquent comparisons between cottages covered with woodbine, and five-storied mills,¹ will never do away with the latter. They cannot abolish the lanes and alleys ; and, therefore, the best thing they can do is to provide the best means of escaping from them. It is no true philanthropy to demand for the working classes conditions of happiness which are impossible, while we deny them those conditions of happiness which are within our power. It is at once the most rational and the kindest course to accept things which we cannot prevent, and at the same time to welcome any remedy ; and, among others, to build railway bridges over all the waterfalls and round all the lakes in the

¹ See “The Two Paths.”

universe, if so the people of our towns are enabled "to stand sometimes upon grass or heath." We freely confess that we have more pleasure in the idea of an excursion-train, full of Manchester working men and women hurrying to refresh their life of labour with a glimpse of Windermere, than in the idea of a dozen Wordsworths reciting their own poetry in the selfish solitude of unapproachable hills.

But neither in this nor in any other cheerful view of our present condition does Mr. Ruskin concur. His heart is filled with gloom, and with disgust at the times in which he lives. Catholic emancipation is probably the reason ; but whatever be the reason, the fact is certain, that the state of England is deplorable. Lord Macaulay tells us that Burke compared George Grenville "to the evil spirit whom Ovid described looking down on the stately temples and wealthy haven of Athens, and scarce able to refrain from weeping because she could find nothing at which to weep." Much of this sort is the temper of Mr. Ruskin. His baseless discontent has grown upon him gradually. His tone has become gloomier with every succeeding volume of his works, until at last it has come to this, that England is "with her right hand casting away the souls of men, and with her left the gifts of God."¹ What this may mean we cannot guess ; but mills seem to be dimly hinted at, when we are told that it may be well that "every kind of sordid, foul, or venomous work, which in other countries men dreaded or disdained, it should become England's duty to do,—becoming thus the offscourer of the earth, and taking the hyena instead of the lion upon her shield."² And Carlyle, of course, is imitated in sneers at our "Houses of Talk." Finally, inquiring readers, coming at last on a passage like the following, accord-

¹ "Modern Painters," vol. v. p. 354.

² *Ibid.*, vol. v. p. 331.

ing to their various tempers, sink into sulky despair, or break out into vehement indignation :—

“ In each city and country of past time, the master-minds had to declare the chief worship which lay at the nation’s heart ; to defend it ; adorn it ; show the range and authority of it. Thus in Athens, we have the triumph of Pallas ; and in Venice the assumption of the Virgin ; here, in England, is our great spiritual fact for ever interpreted to us—the Assumption of the Dragon. No St. George any more to be heard of ; no more dragon-slaying possible : this child, born on St. George’s Day, can only make manifest the dragon, not slay him, sea-serpent as he is ; whom the English Andromeda, not fearing, takes for her lord. The fairy English Queen once thought to command the waves, but it is the sea-dragon now who commands her valleys ; of old the Angel of the Sea ministered to them, but now the Serpent of the Sea ; where once flowed their clear springs now spreads the black Cocytus pool ; and the fair blooming of the Hesperid meadows fades into ashes beneath the Nereid’s Guard. Yes, Albert of Nuremberg ; the time has at last come. Another nation has risen in the strength of its black anger ; and another hand has portrayed the spirit of its toil. Crowned with fire, and with the wings of the bat.” —“ Modern Painters,” vol. v. p. 318.

We confess to have no patience or tolerance at all for nonsense like this. For such a style of writing Mr. Ruskin deserves far more severe condemnation than for all his literary vagaries. These, at the worst, could do no great harm ; but vague denunciations like the above may be productive of much mischief. If any man sees aught that is out of joint in the times in which he lives, it is his duty to state it clearly and plainly, so that no one can misunderstand him. He may not be able to suggest the remedy, but he must be able to point out the fault. Unless he can do this, he had best be silent. Unexplained grumbling is but the indulgence of a luxury long ago

described by Charles Lamb :—"There is a pleasure (we sing not to the profane) far beyond the reach of all the world counts joy—a deep, enduring satisfaction in the depths, where the superficial seek it not, of discontent. . . . To grow bigger every moment in your own conceit, and the world to lessen ; to deify yourself at the expense of your species ; to judge the world,—this is the acme and supreme point of your mystery,—these are the true pleasures of sulkiness." A taste for these pleasures is growing on Mr. Ruskin ; and, what is worse, he tries to communicate the same taste to his readers. Against this we beg to enter our most decided protest. If a man will enjoy these pleasures, let him do so with regard to trifles. He is not entitled to them at the expense of his country—of the whole state of the society in which he lives. We always come back to the decisive point—Tell us distinctly what is wrong, Mr. Carlyle or Mr. Ruskin, and we will try to mend it. But when you abuse us as hastening to perdition, and as throwing away the bounty of God, and can specify no deeper ground of offence than building bridges over waterfalls, then we reject you as false teachers and false censors alike, and return to our commonplace but satisfactory belief in the general happiness and advancement of the present generation.

But it is not with these objections—heartily as we entertain them—that we would close this article. We must recur to a leading characteristic of Mr. Ruskin's writings which gives to them their purest beauty and their deepest truth : we mean the profound religious feeling which pervades them all. He tells us in the "Seven Lamps," that he has been blamed for this ; if so, the blame was most unwise. More, perhaps, than any other quality of his mind, this seriousness of thought has made him the great art critic that he

is. For all true art is but a reflex of religion ; as Cousin has it, "a presentation of moral beauty by physical." In speaking of the great things of sacred art, Mr. Ruskin never fails to refer to the greater and holier realities of which that art is but the feeble copy ; in depicting the solemnities of nature, he never fails to lead us to those eternal truths with which certain aspects of nature are for ever associated. He cannot look on the flaming wings of the angels of Angelico, without rising in thought to the heavenly hosts above ; when he reveals to us the "mountain glory," his mind sweeps on to the special holiness of the mountains on which the Lawgiver and the High Priest of Israel were taken to their God, and the yet more profound sanctity of the mountain on which the divinity of our Lord was proclaimed from heaven. The greatest of our sacred writers, not excepting Jeremy Taylor himself, have written nothing more deeply splendid than the close of the fourth volume of "Modern Painters," where we read of the mysteries which were accomplished on Mount Abarim, and Mount Hor, and on the Mount of Transfiguration. It is in such high arguments that Mr. Ruskin's style achieves its greatest triumphs. His descriptive powers are always wonderful ; his sarcasm is always powerful ; but when themes which demand a sustained exaltation of style inspire him, then he manifests his perfect strength. At such times we have no pomp of verbiage wasted on leaves and lichens ; we have the whole force of the English language, wielded as few men have ever wielded it before, devoted to subjects far transcending its utmost powers of utterance. Then Mr. Ruskin's writing throws into the shade the most splendid declamations of Burke—makes even the prose of Milton appear tame—rises into "a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies." We quote

one of such passages ; not, perhaps, the very finest, but the one best adapted to our limits :—

“This, I believe, is the ordinance of the firmament ; and it seems to me that in the midst of the material nearness of these heavens God means us to acknowledge His own immediate presence as visiting, judging, and blessing us. ‘The earth shook, the heavens also dropped, at the presence of God.’ ‘He doth set His bow in the cloud,’ and thus renews, in the sound of every drooping swathe of rain, His promises of everlasting love. ‘In them hath He set a *tabernacle* for the sun ;’ whose burning ball, which without the firmament would be seen but as an intolerable and scorching circle in the blackness of vacuity, is by that firmament surrounded with gorgeous service, and tempered by mediatorial ministries ; by the firmament of clouds the golden pavement is spread for his chariot-wheels at morning ; by the firmament of clouds the temple is built for his presence to fill with light at noon ; by the firmament of clouds the purple veil is closed at evening round the sanctuary of his rest ; by the mists of the firmament his implacable light is divided, and its separated fierceness appeased into the soft blue that fills the depth of distance with its bloom, and the flush with which the mountains burn as they drink the overflowing of the dayspring. And in this tabernacling of the unendurable sun with men, through the shadows of the firmament, God would seem to set forth the stooping of His own majesty to men, upon the *throne* of the firmament. As the Creator of all the worlds, and the Inhabiter of eternity, we cannot behold Him ; but, as the Judge of the earth and the Preserver of men, those heavens are indeed His dwelling-place. ‘Swear not, neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne ; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool.’ And all those passings to and fro of fruitful shower and grateful shade, and all those visions of silver palaces built about the horizon, and voices of moaning winds and threatening thunders, and glories of coloured robe and cloven ray, are but to deepen in our hearts the acceptance, and distinctness, and dearness of the simple words, ‘Our Father, which art in heaven.’”

—“Modern Painters,” vol. iv. p. 89.

With the majestic music of these words sounding in our ears, and the exaltedness of these thoughts dwelling in our hearts, let us conclude. Now, at the last, we would willingly forget all fault-finding, and take leave of Mr. Ruskin with feelings only of admiration and gratitude. The greatest art-critic that has ever written, he has done more than afford us pleasure—he has opened up to us new worlds of emotion. Often, as we gaze on the perfection of landscape, we may fail, even after Mr. Ruskin's teaching, to think of the Maker of it all; yet it cannot be but that we are so raised, for the time at least, above the thoughts and cares of common life. Great art, he tells us, may be defined as the "art of dreaming." If so, then the sleep in which such dreams may come is better than most of our waking. Mr. Ruskin has shown us what visions high of beauty, and goodness, and truth, can bless the sleep of genius. More than this, he will lead every docile reader to the portals at least of that happy dreamland, where he can catch a glimpse of the far-off glory; where all the poetry of his nature will be stirred within him; where he can forget, for a while, disappointment, and sorrow, and cruel separation; where his unrest can be quieted, his vague longings for the moment satisfied; and whence he can return, comforted and strengthened, to the light and the labour of the day.

GEORGE ELIOT'S NOVELS.¹

SOME years ago general attention was arrested by a series of stories then appearing in "Blackwood's Magazine," under the title of "Scenes of Clerical Life." These tales did not win their way very rapidly, nor were they ever, perhaps, in the strict sense of the word, popular. But eventually their reputation extended beyond the class of ordinary novel-readers; and they gained from their admirers an enthusiastic admiration, more to be relied on than any mere noisy popularity. From the nature of the tales this was what might have been expected. They were almost entirely without incident, and were therefore wanting in what is commonly called interest—a want which, in nine cases out of ten, would be fatal to the success of magazine stories. Worse than this, they were all melancholy; and nothing alienates the casual reader so much as a persistent tone of sadness. On the other hand, readers who can dispense with excitement, and who do not turn from the aspect of

¹ 1. "Scenes of Clerical Life." By George Eliot. 2 vols. Edinburgh, 1858.

2. "Adam Bede." 3 vols. Edinburgh, 1859.

3. "The Mill on the Floss." 3 vols. Edinburgh, 1860.

4. "Silas Marner." 1 vol. Edinburgh, 1861.

5. "Romola." 3 vols. London, 1863.

6. "Felix Holt." 3 vols. Edinburgh, 1866.—[Reprinted from the "North British Review," No. 89. September 1866.]

sorrow, were fascinated by a rare beauty of style, a loftiness of tone beyond common, a reach of thought and command of passion which challenged comparison with the masters of literature. So far as popularity is concerned, "Adam Bede" was a great advance from the "Scenes of Clerical Life;" and then came in succession the books which are at the head of this article, and which have gained for George Eliot a place second to none among the living writers of English fiction. Her reputation grew with each successive effort; and "Felix Holt" especially has been received with universal pæans of delight.

Two of our ablest living critics, Mr. Arnold and Mr. Palgrave, take frequent occasion to lament the want in English literature of anything like sound criticism. Mr. Arnold is quite plaintive on this theme:—"Almost the last thing for which one would come to English literature is just that very thing which now Europe most desires—criticism." Mr. Palgrave puts it more gently when he laments "that deficiency in independent taste which is, it may be feared, in some ways characteristic of Englishmen. In picture-buying, at any rate, precedent and fashion are too often dominant." Precedent and fashion dominate just as much in judging of novels as in judging of pictures. It was long before the "independent taste" of our critics recognised the merits which put George Eliot's writings on a totally different platform from the trash the present enormous supply of which is a disgrace to our literature; and now, when the fashion has set in, praise is lavished on her later works, in terms which would require modification if applied to the greatest masters of fiction. With much of this praise we heartily concur; from some of it we are constrained to dissent. For example, when a critic declares it certain that if people were to take to heart

the lessons which "Felix Holt" contains, "the next generation would rise to a moral excellence far above that of to-day, and leave many meannesses and miseries under their feet," we feel that a position is claimed for George Eliot as the teacher of a morality purer and more exalted than that which generally regulates the lives of mankind, or which animates the pages of ordinary writers. We greatly doubt whether she is entitled to this position; and on this point alone—to say nothing of matters of more strictly literary aspect—it may be worth while shortly to examine George Eliot's works.

Dr. Johnson defines a novel as "a smooth tale, generally of love." Definitions, like the syllogism, are often unequal to the subtlety of nature; certainly Johnson's definition of the novel is altogether unequal to the subtlety and variety of modern fiction. The favourite novels now-a-days are far from being "smooth tales," and the love of which they tell is too often a distorted image of what he meant by the word. To George Eliot's writings the definition is peculiarly inadequate. The deep tide of passion in her tales, breaking against harsh circumstance, cannot flow smoothly; and of all her novels, perhaps "The Mill on the Floss" alone is, in the ordinary acceptance of the word, a love-story. In fact, story-telling at all is not her forte. Her great characteristic is her knowledge of human nature, and the grasp of thought with which she seizes and brings before us its most hidden secrets. Scott said of Richardson that "in his survey of the heart he left neither head, bay, nor inlet behind him until he had traced its soundings, and laid it down in his chart with all its minute sinuosities, its depths, and its shallows." More than even this may be said with truth of George Eliot. She has sounded, with no less accuracy than Richardson, the

depths and the shallows of every little bay ; and she has ventured boldly on distant seas, of which the storms and the treacherous calms were to him alike unknown.

Considering George Eliot as a writer generally, without having regard to her special vocation as a writer of novels, criticism cheerfully recognises many rare excellencies. First among these of common consent, must be placed her style. It would be flattery to place her on a level with Thackeray. But now that we have lost Thackeray, she is in this point above all others. Trollope, indeed, has a merit of his own ; but his easy naturalness is altogether on a lower level. George Eliot's style is rich in beauty and power. It is a splendid vehicle. We can often mark its effect in raising the thought to a dignity greater than its own. Her wealth of allusion is considerable, and it is indicated with becoming reserve, not ostentatiously obtruded, as is the fashion with most of our present novelists ; to borrow a graceful simile from Mr. Hannay, it is like "violets hidden in the green of her prose." Above all, her style is not the result of art only : it has that indescribable stamp which marks it as the result of feeling and thought. The thought may not be always deep, the feeling may not be always right, but both are uniformly original and sincere. The following passage from one of her early writings exhibits some of her characteristic excellencies, and shows also the wide sympathies and large charity of the writer :—

"Yes, the movement was good, though it had that mixture of folly and evil which often makes what is good an offence to feeble and fastidious minds, who want human actions and characters riddled through the sieve of their own ideas, before they can accord their sympathy or admiration. Such minds, I dare say, would have found Mr. Tryan's character very

much in need of that riddling process. The blessed work of helping the world forward happily does not wait to be done by perfect men, and I should imagine that neither Luther nor John Bunyan, for example, would have satisfied the modern demand for an ideal hero, who believes nothing but what is true, feels nothing but what is exalted, and does nothing but what is graceful. The real heroes of God's making are quite different: they have their natural heritage of love and conscience which they drew in with their mother's milk; they know one or two of those deep spiritual truths which are only to be won by long wrestling with their own sins and their own sorrows; they have earned faith and strength so far as they have done genuine work: but the rest is dry barren theory, blank prejudice, vague hearsay. Their insight is blended with mere opinion; their sympathy is perhaps confined in narrow conduits of doctrine, instead of flowing forth with the freedom of a stream that blesses every weed in its course; obstinacy or self-assertion will often interfuse itself with their grandest impulses; and their very deeds of self-sacrifice are sometimes only the rebound of a passionate egoism. So it was with Mr. Tryan: and any one looking at him with the bird's-eye glance of a critic might perhaps say that he made the mistake of identifying Christianity with a too narrow doctrinal system; that he saw God's work too exclusively in antagonism to the world, the flesh, and the devil; that his intellectual culture was too limited—and so on; making Mr. Tryan the text for a wise discourse on the characteristics of the Evangelical school in his day.

“But I am not poised at that lofty height. I am on the level and in the press with him, as he struggles his way along the stony road, through the crowd of unloving fellow-men. He is stumbling, perhaps; his heart now beats fast with dread, now heavily with anguish; his eyes are sometimes dim with tears, which he makes haste to dash away; he pushes manfully on, with fluctuating faith and courage, with a sensitive failing body; at last he falls, the struggle is ended, and the crowd closes over the space he has left.

“‘One of the Evangelical clergy, a disciple of Venn,’ says the critic from his bird's-eye station. ‘Not a remarkable

specimen ; the anatomy and habits of his species have been determined long ago.'

"Yet surely, surely the only true knowledge of our fellow-man is that which enables us to feel with him—which gives us a fine ear for the heart-pulses that are beating under the mere clothes of circumstance and opinion. Our subtlest analysis of schools and sects must miss the essential truth, unless it be lit up by the love that sees in all forms of human thought and work, the life and death struggles of separate human beings."

As a contrast with this, take a passage, very graceful in description and true in feeling, from what we think the purest and most beautiful of all her tales, "Mr. Gilfil's Love-story :"—

"They reached the flower-garden, and turned mechanically in at the gate that opened, through a high thick hedge, on an expanse of brilliant colour, which, after the green shades they had passed through, startled the eye like flames. The effect was assisted by an undulation of the ground, which gradually descended from the entrance-gate, and then rose again towards the opposite end, crowned by an orangery. The flowers were glowing with their evening splendours : verbenas and heliotropes were sending up their finest incense. It seemed a gala where all was happiness and brilliancy, and misery could find no sympathy. This was the effect it had on Caterina. As she wound among the beds of gold and blue and pink, where the flowers seemed to be looking at her with wondering elf-like eyes, knowing nothing of sorrow, the feeling of isolation in her wretchedness overcame her, and the tears, which had been before trickling slowly down her pale cheeks, now gushed forth accompanied with sobs. And yet there was a loving human being close beside her, whose heart was aching for hers, who was possessed by the feeling that she was miserable, and that he was helpless to soothe her. But she was too much irritated by the idea that his wishes were different from hers, that he rather regretted the folly of her hopes than the probability of their disappointment, to take any comfort in his sympathy. Caterina, like the rest of us, turned away from

sympathy which she suspected to be mingled with criticism, as the child turns away from the sweetmeat in which it suspects imperceptible medicine."

And again, in quite a different style :—

"It was one of their happy mornings. They trotted along and sat down together, with no thought that life would ever change much for them : they would only get bigger and not go to school, and it would always be like the holidays ; they would always live together and be fond of each other. And the mill with its booming—the great chestnut-tree under which they played at houses—their own little river, the Ripple, where the banks seemed like home, and Tom was always seeing the water-rats, while Maggie gathered the purple plummy tops of the reeds, which she forgot and dropped afterwards—above all, the great Floss, along which they wandered with a sense of travel, to see the rushing spring-tide, the awful Eagre, come up like a hungry monster, or to see the Great Ash which had once wailed and groaned like a man—these things would always be just the same to them. Tom thought people were at a disadvantage who lived on any other spot of the globe ; and Maggie, when she read about Christiana passing 'the river over which there is no bridge,' always saw the Floss between the green pastures by the Great Ash.

"Life did change for Tom and Maggie ; and yet they were not wrong in believing that the thoughts and loves of these first years would always make part of their lives. We could never have loved the earth so well if we had had no childhood in it,—if it were not the earth where the same flowers come up again every spring that we used to gather with our tiny fingers as we sat lipping to ourselves on the grass—the same hips and haws on the autumn hedgerows—the same redbreasts that we used to call 'God's birds,' because they did no harm to the precious crops. What novelty is worth that sweet monotony where everything is known, and *loved* because it is known ?

"The wood I walk in on this mild May day, with the young yellow-brown foliage of the oaks between me and the blue sky, the white star-flowers and the blue-eyed

speedwell and the ground ivy at my feet—what grove of tropic palms, what strange ferns or splendid broad petalled blossoms, could ever thrill such deep and delicate fibres within me as this home-scene? These familiar flowers, these well-remembered bird-notes, this sky with its fitful brightness, these furrowed and grassy fields, each with a sort of personality given to it by the capricious hedgerows,—such things as these are the mother tongue of our imagination, the language that is laden with all the subtle inextricable associations the fleeting hours of our childhood left behind them. Our delight in the sunshine on the deep-bladed grass to-day, might be no more than the faint perception of wearied souls, if it were not for the sunshine and the grass in the far-off years, which still live in us, and transform our perception into love.”

It is not too much to say, that from few novelists in the English language could passages be selected giving evidence of such varied power. On the other hand, George Eliot is often forgetful of the beauty of simplicity. Her richness of language sometimes makes her style ornate and over-loaded; her eagerness of thought leads her into complexity and confusion of expression. It is impossible to avoid the comparison with Thackeray, for she resembles him closely in the device of interweaving reflection and comment with the story; and it is in such passages that both writers reach their greatest wonders of style. At her best she falls short of his exquisite simplicity, which sprang from the delicate reserve of his nature, and carried with it a suggestive power over the heart of the reader, reaching far beyond the actual written word; of his complete appropriateness, never too much or too little; of his finished beauty of language, like crystal, at once clear and splendid. And in some of her favourite fine passages, that is, in her worst, there is a gaudiness of diction and a vagueness of thought—sometimes descending to mere rodomontade.

We could quote many passages in support of this criticism. We select three, all from the first volume of "Felix Holt :"—

"The sensitive little minister knew instinctively that words which would cost him efforts as painful as the obedient footsteps of a wounded bleeding hound that wills a foreseen throe, would fall on this man as the pressure of tender fingers falls on a brazen glove."

"For there is seldom any wrong-doing which does not carry along with it some downfall of blindly-climbing hopes, some hard entail of suffering, some quickly-satiated desire that survives, with the life in death of old paralytic vice, to see itself cursed by its woful progeny—some tragic mark of kinship in the one brief life to the far-stretching life that went before, and to the life that is to come after, such as has raised the pity and terror of men ever since they began to discern between will and destiny."

"The poets have told us of a dolorous enchanted forest in the under world. The thorn-bushes there, and the thick-barked stems, have human histories hidden in them; the power of unuttered cries dwells in the passionless-seeming branches, and the red, warm blood is darkly feeding the quivering nerves of a sleepless memory that watches through all dreams. These things are a parable."

Another quality of George Eliot's writings which has attracted unbounded admiration, is the humour they are thought to display. When "Adam Bede" appeared, we remember an able critic gave her credit for a more infinite humour than that of Scott. Now, while her writings sparkle with wit, we should have doubted their claims to be considered humorous, in the proper sense of the word. It is a delicate matter to discriminate between these wayward faculties; and we have no wish to enter upon a well-worn controversy.

We can never hope to come to any definite conclusion ; the question whether or not a writer is humorous must be always very much answered according to individual fancy. The dogmas of another eminent critic as to Scott are even more bewildering. In Mr. Senior's "Essays," lately republished, are included elaborate criticisms of the Waverley Novels, which originally appeared in the "Quarterly Review." There, amid many able and acute remarks, we find great objection taken to Sir Walter Scott's "bores," as the critic calls them ; and among these are particularly specified—the Antiquary and Dugald Dalgetty. Views like these, coming from such a quarter, puzzle us amazingly, and suggest the idea, which had best be frankly expressed, that Scott's most characteristic excellence is missed by many of his readers, especially his Southern readers. To our thinking, the humour of George Eliot is as a shadow beside that of the Ariosto of the North. It is often purely verbal, as in the following examples, in the former of which the affected style of phraseology introduced by Mr. Dickens is very apparent :—

"Do you know the dulcet strength, the animating blandness of tea sufficiently blended with real farmhouse cream ? No—most likely you are a miserable town-bred reader, who think of cream as a thinnish white fluid, delivered in infinitesimal pennyworths down area steps ; or perhaps, from a presentiment of calves' brains, you refrain from any lacteal addition, and rasp your tongue with unmitigated bohea. You have a vague idea of a milch cow as probably a white plaster animal standing in a buttermilk window, and you know nothing of the sweet history of genuine cream, such as Miss Gibbs's."

"'I've nothing to say again' her piety, my dear ; but I know very well I shouldn't like her to cook my victual. When a man comes in hungry an' tired, piety won't feed

him, I reckon. Hard carrots 'ull lie heavy on his stomach, piety or no piety. I called in one day when she was dishin' up Mr. Tryan's dinner, an' I could see the potatoes was as watery as watery. It's right enough to be speritial—I'm no enemy to that; but I like my potatoes mealy.'"

At its best, her humour is hard, resting less upon habits of thought than upon point and force of expression. In the mouths of Florentine magnates Mrs. Poyser's keen proverbs are dignified into grave aphorisms:—"Friendliness is much such a steed as Ser Benghi's, it will hardly show much alacrity unless it has got the thistle of hatred under its tail"—but the style of thing is the same, exceedingly clever and witty, not, we think, humorous. How hard, and how wanting in mobility is even Mrs. Poyser beside Mause Headrigg or Jenny Dennison! And, as is always the case with wit of this description, it is too universal. George Eliot is guilty of the error to which masters of verbal wit are prone, namely, that *all* her characters are witty. She is not such a sinner in this respect as some—as Sheridan, for example; but the fault is there. Her characters range over all ranks of society, and represent many modes of thought; they speak in various dialects; but they express themselves always with a force and vigour, often with a wit, which strikes the reader as unnatural.

As it is with her characters, so also with her humorous scenes. The "High Life Below Stairs," in the first volume of "Felix Holt," has been the subject of much exaggerated praise. The fun of it consists almost solely in some very clever "chaff" on a heavy-minded butler by a flippant valet—the leading feature of which is rather ponderous jesting on the butler's name. The alehouse scene in "Silas Marner" is in a higher style. But neither of them can stand for one moment beside the post-office scene

in the "Antiquary," where Mrs. Mailsetter and two of her cronies are "sorting" the letters before they are delivered. The interlocutors are three—Mrs. Mailsetter herself, the baker's wife, and the butcher's wife : each has plainly a character of her own, and thinks and speaks in strict accordance therewith ; not one of them even makes a remark that strikes us as unusually clever or unusually well put, and yet all Fairport is taken through hands by these chattering old women ; and what humour there is in the contrast between their various points of view and estimates of character, in their characteristic squabble, and the still more characteristic compromise by which it is healed,—the naturalness and perfect *keeping* of the whole !

George Eliot's jocular incidents may be dismissed in a line. They are too absurd. The "Florentine Joke" in "Romola," where a monkey is brought to a doctor as a sick baby ; a preposterous mock play-bill in "Janet's Repentance ;" the triumph of a servant over his rival by the daring exploit of cutting off his coat-tails when he was sleeping—dwelt upon at great length in "Felix Holt" as a thing of infinite jest,—these three examples are enough to show that George Eliot has no comprehension of that branch of the ludicrous which is called fun.

She perhaps reaches to humour in her children, and that because she thoroughly understands children, and can enter into their every thought. The childhood of Maggie and Tom Tulliver makes the first volume of "The Mill on the Floss" quite different from the other two. Gleams of bright humour, too, come with the golden-haired child into the house of Silas Marner. But beyond this we cannot go. Heartily as we admire George Eliot's brilliant wit, we cannot hold her entitled to a foremost place

among humorists. As a rule, women do not appreciate humour ; they never excel in it. If it be true, as the author of " Friends in Council " says, that a man's humour is the deepest part of his nature, this is not to be wondered at. Howsoever able they may be, women can hardly have the mental reach or experience required to embrace the whole of man's nature. And besides, and what is perhaps more to the purpose, the vagaries of this faculty are repugnant both to their tastes and to their prejudices.

We have next to consider George Eliot with special reference to her vocation as a novelist. That her literary career has fallen on a time when it is the imperative mode to write stories, has been in some respects an advantage to her ; in some the reverse. She possesses many of the qualifications necessary for the novelist ; in others again she is conspicuously deficient.

In the first place, we think she seriously errs in the choice of her stories. They are uniformly of a painful nature. We are far from saying that pain or sorrow should be excluded from fiction ; but it must not occupy a too prominent place. Nor can the pain in George Eliot's tales be held as falling under the imposing name of tragedy. The tragic is separated from the merely painful or sorrowful by differences hard to state clearly, but not therefore fanciful. Tragic feeling in the old time sprang from sources different from those which gave it birth among the moderns. Greek tragedy concerned itself, for the most part, with the actions of the gods, at best of demigods and heroes, —beings far removed from the feebler race of man ; and the whole was borne along on the bosom of a dark tide of destiny, incomprehensible, resistless, powerful over all, even over the gods, hurrying on to some mysterious end,—the destruction alike of the

mortal and the divine race. It was thus—as compared with our tragedy—alien from humanity, and appeals to our sense of the terrible and the sublime. Modern tragedy, on the other hand, seeks its themes in the fortunes of man, and rests rather on the emotion of melancholy. This emotion, according to Schlegel, lies at the root of all modern poetry—the poetry of desire. “When the soul, resting as it were under the willows of exile, breathes out its longing for its distant home, what else but melancholy can be the keynote of its songs?” The same idea is beautifully expressed by Hood :—

“ All things are touch’d with melancholy.
Born of the secret soul’s mistrust,
To feel her fair ethereal wings
Weigh’d down with vile degraded dust ;
Even the bright extremes of joy
Bring on conclusions of disgust,
Like the sweet blossoms of the May
Whose fragrance ends in must.
O give her, then, her tribute just,
Her sighs and tears, and musings holy !
There is no music in the life
That sounds with idiot laughter solely ;
There’s not a string attuned to mirth,
But has its chord in melancholy.”

This does not mean—at least we do not quote it as meaning—that a green melancholy, or even a vague sadness of spirit, is identical with tragic feeling. Weeping from mere wantonness is quite apart from tragedy. But Schlegel can best explain his own point of view, familiar to many of our readers as the explanation may be :—

“ All that we do, all that we effect, is vain and perishable ; death stands everywhere in the background, and to it every well or ill spent moment brings us nearer and closer ; and

even when a man has been so singularly fortunate as to reach the utmost term of life without any grievous calamity, the inevitable doom still awaits him to leave or to be left by all that is most dear to him on earth. There is no bond of love without a separation, no enjoyment without the grief of losing it. When, however, we contemplate the relations of our existence to the extreme limit of possibilities; when we reflect on its entire dependence on a chain of causes and effects, stretching beyond our ken; when we consider how—weak and helpless, and doomed to struggle against the enormous powers of nature and conflicting appetites—we are cast on the shores of an unknown world, as it were, shipwrecked at our very birth; how we are subject to all kinds of errors and deceptions, any one of which may be our ruin; that in our passions we cherish an enemy in our bosoms; how every moment demands from us, in the name of the most sacred duties, the sacrifice of our dearest inclinations, and how at one blow we may be robbed of all that we have acquired with much toil and difficulty; that with every accession to our stores, the risk of loss is proportionately increased, and we are only the more exposed to the malice of hostile fortune: when we think upon all this, every heart which is not dead to feeling must be overpowered by an inexpressible melancholy, for which there is no other counterpoise than the consciousness of a vocation transcending the limits of this earthly life. This is the tragic tone of mind; and when the thought of the possible issues out of the mind as a living reality, when this tone pervades and animates a visible representation of the most striking incidents of violent revolutions in a man's fortune, either prostrating his mental energies or calling forth the most heroic endurance—then the result is *Tragic Poetry*."

After this quotation it is but fair to bring to the reader's recollection George Eliot's own statement and vindication of the tragic element in her writings:—

"The pride and obstinacy of millers and other insignificant people, whom you pass unnoticingly on the road every day, have their tragedy too; but it is of that unwept, hidden sort, that goes on from generation to generation, and leaves

no record—such tragedy, perhaps, as lies in the conflicts of young souls, hungry for joy, under a lot made suddenly hard to them, under the dreariness of a home where the morning brings no promise with it, and where the unexpectant discontent of worn and disappointed parents weighs on the children like a damp, thick air, in which all the functions of life are depressed; or such tragedy as lies in the slow or sudden death that follows on a bruised passion, though it may be a death that finds only a parish funeral.”

The doctrine here laid down seems to be that the elements of true tragedy are always existing, and are to be found in all classes of society. Now, this can only be admitted subject to considerable reservations. In the first place, even the social position of the actors becomes, in this question, a thing of some moment. The fate of any poor French girl who was drowned in the Loire during the Terror may have been as sad and as pitiable as the death of Marie Antoinette; but it was not as tragic: if there was no other distinction, the element of *catastrophe* would in such a case be deficient. In the next place, the mental range of the victims—their intellectual and moral capacity—is a thing of great moment. The disappointed love of a miller's daughter is likely to be very different from the passionate despair in which Romeo and Juliet ends; the gradual descent into low treachery of a wily Greek is a less “tragic” theme than the downfall of a nature like Macbeth's. Above all, the character of the suffering represented is of the greatest moment. It is quite unsound to maintain that the vexations and sorrows of every-day life reach the heights or the depths of tragedy. There is “a grand style” of theme as well as in expression. The criminal, the painful, even the sorrowful, is not the tragic. Schlegel's analysis, indeed, might seem to embrace the ordinary fortunes of man; and he has

doubtless traced to its true source the tragic *feeling*; but if this feeling is to have full scope and proper development, if, in a word, real tragedy is to be created, there must be the extremes of calamity or trial acting on natures powerful beyond common for good or evil. The familiar illustration of Dr. Johnson applies: the pitcher may be as full as the barrel, but it does not hold so much. Before the supreme masters, indeed, these distinctions are as naught. In the hands of the highest genius even ordinary types of crime may rise to tragedy; and the cell of a peasant girl condemned for child-murder may be made the scene of a struggle between the mightiest spiritual influences which have sway over the heart of mankind. But it would be idle to say that any such height is reached in "Adam Bede," and even less in any of the other tales. The vexations resulting from a large family and a small income, the evil habit of drinking—especially in women,—the disagreeableness to a lady of birth and culture of being found out in guilty relation with the family solicitor, the sudden passion of a girl for her cousin's lover, and her subsequent death by drowning; even the blight thrown over a life by the loss of the loved, or the waking of a high-minded woman from a golden dream of love to find herself wedded to a traitor—none of these are necessarily themes of tragedy.

If there is any truth in this view, and if George Eliot's writings do really fall short of the tragic, then we hold it clear that in them misfortune and sorrow are too much the prevailing lot. Thus death, the crown of all sorrow, the easiest, and therefore the commonest source of pathos, but yet that which is most rarely appealed to by the true artist, is seldom absent from her stage. Now, of all writings which regard chiefly the gloomy aspects of life, we doubt the truth and

dispute the profit. It is not by allowing the imagination to dwell on representations, however pathetic, of pain and suffering, that we best gain strength to endure the one or the other. The "purification of the passions" cannot come in this wise. This is somewhat of a digression, and the criticism is not new; yet it is worth enforcing at present. For our novelists, deficient in art, think that interest can be best aroused by criminality or sorrow. Some go for a subject to the annals of the Old Bailey; others disturb and distress readers with scenes of misery unavailing to instruct or to elevate. These devices may pay, and they will not perhaps do much harm; but we protest earnestly against their being sheltered under the plea which is conveyed in the misleading words, "the tragedy of every-day life."

Besides this infelicity in her choice of subjects, George Eliot is deficient in the power of inventing a story. Her plots are always bad. We do not, of course, compare her with such masterpieces of art as "Tom Jones," or with the easy grace of Miss Austen; she does not reach even to the careless coherence of Scott. The "Scenes of Clerical Life" were but short tales hardly admitting of what is properly called a plot; in "Adam Bede" and "Romola" there is a mere sequence of events; and "The Mill on the Floss" is but a series of improbable incidents. In "Felix Holt," again, there is a very careful plot; and just in proportion to the elaboration of the effort is the failure conspicuous. "Felix Holt," among its many and rare excellencies, can make no claim to the merit of interest as a story. If people would only have courage to speak truth, we suspect that most readers would confess to a feeling of extreme weariness over its pages. As to the characters we shall speak afterwards; we are now concerned with

the story alone: and we assert with confidence that nobody can feel real excitement or interest in anything so utterly improbable and unnatural. The whole story of the Transome estate—how it was lost and won,—the removal of the real heir, the appearance of his daughter (after her strange protection) in the vicinity of the estate, the appearance at the same time and place of the last representative of the old house, and his too opportune death,—these things are all managed with a clumsiness which finds its appropriate conclusion in the perfect absurdity of the conduct of everybody.

Readers of the present day are an impatient generation, and must be interested somehow. Deficiency in plot, therefore, has to be made up for in some way; and this necessity leads to sensationalism and unnaturalness of incident. Certainly, from whatever cause they come, examples of these faults are frequent in George Eliot's writings. The arrival of the reprieve in "Adam Bede" at the moment of execution is an old stage-trick, which jars painfully on the reader; in "Romola" the closing scene of Tito is strangely theatrical; in "The Mill on the Floss" the elopement in a punt, and the final catastrophe of the flood, are—the one morally, the other physically—about equally unnatural; but perhaps the climax of absurdity is reached in "Felix Holt." The election riot in that novel has appeared to some critics worthy of special commendation. There could be no stronger proof of the low ebb to which criticism has sunk among us. The only purpose which that scene serves is the purpose of representing the hero of the book—a hero, moreover, whose title to be such rests solely on his intellect—as a most obtrusive and unmitigated fool. Felix Holt is, above all things, a shrewd able man; and we are expected to believe that a man of

this sort would put himself at the head of a mob, lead them to the robbery of a house, superintend the brutal usage of an old man, ending with tying him to a post,—generally, in short, be their guide, philosopher, and friend throughout all their frantic passion; in which character he himself murders a special constable,—and all this with the single object of stopping the riot. On the part of any man such conduct would be utterly absurd; on the part of Felix Holt it was simply impossible. This fault of extravagance of incident pervades all George Eliot's novels, and a very serious fault it is, entirely destructive of naturalness, and therefore of interest.

As an historical novelist (and she has aimed at this dignity), we cannot think George Eliot has been successful. Her characteristic excellencies she carries, of course, into all her writings. But in this particular line she has one special and vital defect: she has not the power of representing a period. Taking even "*Romola*," it can hardly be maintained that the great crisis in Florentine history, at the date of which the story is laid, is either vividly or fully brought before the reader. We are not now speaking of the power lavished on individual characters; we are speaking of the representation of the time, with all its varied and vital interests; and readers who remember "*Quentin Durward*" will comprehend the art which is, we think, in "*Romola*" conspicuous by its absence. In "*Romola*" many great men are brought on the scene. Such matters as the ordering of processions and the fashion of costume are given, we cannot doubt, with most perfect accuracy; but the spirit of the whole is wanting; there is nothing like the dramatic power which has made alive for us the courts of Louis XI. and of Charles of Burgundy. The same remarks apply to "*Felix Holt*." We are told that the date of

the story is 1832, and the title is "*Felix Holt the Radical*"—a good publishers' device, considering what political questions were mainly agitating the country when the book appeared. But the whole thing is a delusion. So far as connection with the time goes, or with the prominent subject of the time, the date of the tale might as well have been 1732, and the title *Felix Holt the Mahometan*. We speak, of course, of a real connection with the time—not of such outward matters as the fact that there is a general election, and that one man contests the county as a Tory, and another as a Radical. A careful and impartial representation of the state of feeling in this country after the passing of the Reform Bill; an estimate of what Radicalism then was—presenting, we should think, a curious contrast to what Radicalism now is,—these would have afforded material for much careful and interesting study. Nothing of the sort is attempted. There is much writing *about* politics, but nothing approaching to a real picture of the political life of the time. Mail-coaches, Dissenters' meeting-houses, many phases of life are represented; but that which especially ought to have been represented, namely, the political phase, has been omitted. As for the ideal Radical of 1832, he is an entirely modern figure—an utter anachronism—a sort of cross between Mr. Lowe and Lord Elcho.

Nor can it be said with truth that George Eliot has been felicitous in her representations of the historical characters whom she brings on her scene. The period of "*Romola*" gave her great scope: a world of varied character was before her where to choose; but we cannot think she has chosen well, or that the result has been fortunate. Savonarola was an ambitious effort, but the nobler side of his character alone is given: no one will find in "*Romola*" a key to the whole com-

plex nature of that man—a mystery to all his contemporaries, probably not less so to himself. The introduction of Macchiavelli is a more conspicuous failure. Even in his boyhood we suspect the great Florentine would never have sported such very obvious Macchiavellianisms as the following. We are quite sure that if he had, the expression of them would not have in the least surprised or horrified any intelligent Italian :—

“‘That is true,’ said Niccolo Macchiavelli; ‘but where personal ties are strong, the hostilities they raise must be taken due account of. Many of these halfway severities are mere hotheaded blundering. The only safe blows to be inflicted on men and parties are the blows that are too heavy to be avenged.’

“‘Niccolo,’ said Cennini, ‘there is a clever wickedness in thy talk sometimes that makes me mistrust thy pleasant young face as if it were a mask of Satan.’

“‘Not at all, my good Domenico,’ said Macchiavelli, smiling, and laying his hand on the elder’s shoulder. ‘Satan was a blunderer, an introducer of *novità*, who made a stupendous failure. If he had succeeded, we should all have been worshipping him, and his portrait would have been more flattered.’

“‘Well, well,’ said Cennini, ‘I say not thy doctrine is not too clever for Satan : I only say it is wicked enough for him.’”

Novelists are very rarely successful in their dialogue : it seems very difficult to make people talk as they do in real life. In this particular George Eliot is especially happy. She falls short, indeed, of Miss Austen and Thackeray, who in this point stand quite alone. But she is conspicuously superior to most writers ; and in her this excellence is the more remarkable because her dialogue is not confined to ordinary themes. It is easy for conversation to be natural, when, as with Trollope, the subjects of it are commonplace. But George Eliot’s conversations are natural

whatever be the subject. In the greatest warmth of passion, in the depth of misery, in the utmost fervour of exhortation, her characters use language never stilted, or exaggerated, or bombastic ; yet it is always such as rises to the lips under the overmastering power of deep emotion,—penetrated as it were with the feeling of the moment. Even her historical novels—a style of writing in which the temptation to make people talk ridiculously seems all-powerful—are free from this fault. In her pages we meet with none of the “Odd-Zookses” and “By mine Halidomes,” and other wonderful ejaculations, which startle us in Sir Walter Scott himself.

Descriptions of scenery in novels are often, we suspect, passed over by the ordinary reader. Such of George Eliot's readers as follow this general custom deprive themselves of a keen pleasure. Her descriptions are rich and vivid in an unusual degree. True, they are all in a certain style. As her characters are taken, for the most part, from the lower classes of society, so her descriptions are of what may be called the humbler kinds of scenery. She is an artist rather of the Dutch school. The mightier wonders of nature, the grandeur of the hills, the majesty and mystery of the sea, are not brought down to us ; but nature in her lowlier and gentler aspects never was sketched with a firmer hand, or made beautiful with a colouring so rich. She is perfectly at home with English rural life, and at her will ordinary English scenery rises before our eyes bright with an unexpected beauty. The power of appealing which lies in the commonest features of natural scenery has rarely been interpreted with such subtlety and truth. The mill on the banks of the sluggish river gliding among the osiers, the farm-house hid amid the apple-blossoms, the farm-yard blithe with industry, and the heavy waggons

bringing plenty from a field; the labours of the reapers among the splendours of an English autumn, the ingathering of the harvest—such are the scenes where her genius for description finds its most perfect triumph. “Loamshire,” in a word, is altogether her own domain. Fresh in the recollection of every one is that wonderful effort of descriptive power with which “Felix Holt” opens—how the coach rolled through a land where

“the bushy hedgerows wasted the land with their straggling beauty, shrouded the grassy borders of the pastures with catkinned hazels, and tossed their long blackberry branches on the cornfields. Perhaps they were white with May, or starred with pale pink dog-roses; perhaps the urchins were already nutting amongst them, or gathering the plenteous crabs. It was worth the journey only to see those hedgerows, the liberal homes of unmarketable beauty—of the purple-blossomed ruby-berried nightshade, of the wild convolvulus climbing and spreading in tendrilled strength till it made a great curtain of pale-green hearts and white trumpets, of the many-tubed honeysuckle which, in its most delicate fragrance, hid a charm more subtle and penetrating than beauty. Even if it were winter the hedgerows showed their coral, the scarlet haws, the deep-crimson hips, with lingering brown leaves to make a resting-place for the jewels of the hoar-frost. Such hedgerows were often as tall as the labourers’ cottages dotted along the lanes, or clustered into a small hamlet, their little dingy windows telling, like thick-filmed eyes, of nothing but the darkness within.”

Of the same stamp is the following passage, in which a peculiarly English scene is painted with a loving elaboration and surprising fidelity. It is from the “Scenes of Clerical Life,” and readers will gladly excuse the frequency of our quotations when we can bring again before them writing like this:—

“No wonder Mr. Jerome was tempted to linger in the garden, for though the house was pretty and well deserved

its name,—‘the White House,’ the tall damask roses that clustered over the porch being thrown into relief by rough stucco of the most brilliant white,—yet the garden and orchards were Mr. Jerome’s glory, as well they might be; and there was nothing in which he had a more innocent pride—peace to a good man’s memory! all his pride was innocent—than in conducting a hitherto uninitiated visitor over his grounds, and making him in some degree aware of the incomparable advantages possessed by the inhabitants of the White House in the matter of red-streaked apples, russets, northern greens (excellent for baking), swan-egg pears, and early vegetables, to say nothing of flowering ‘srubs,’ pink hawthorns, lavender bushes more than ever Mrs. Jerome could use, and, in short, a superabundance of everything that a person retired from business could desire to possess himself or to share with his friends. The garden was one of those old-fashioned paradises which hardly exist any longer except as memories of our childhood: no finical separation between flower and kitchen garden there; no monotony of enjoyment for one sense to the exclusion of another; but a charming paradisaical mingling of all that was pleasant to the eyes and good for food. The rich flower-border running along every walk, with its endless succession of spring-flowers, anemones, auriculas, wall-flowers, sweet-williams, campanulas, snapdragons, and tiger-lilies, had its taller beauties, such as moss and Provence roses, varied with espalier apple-trees; the crimson of a carnation was carried out in the lurking crimson of the neighbouring strawberry-beds; you gathered a moss-rose one moment and a bunch of currants the next; you were in a delicious fluctuation between the scent of jasmine and the juice of gooseberries. Then what a high wall at one end, flanked by a summer-house so lofty, that after ascending its long flight of steps you could see perfectly well there was no view worth looking at; what alcoves and garden-seats in all directions; and along one side, what a hedge, tall and firm, and unbroken, like a green wall!”

Without doubt, however, George Eliot’s great point as a novelist is in her characters. On whatever scores they may be objected to, there can be no dispute as

to the fact that they are powerfully and vigorously drawn. She has a curious familiarity with certain out-of-the-way forms of clerical life, both in the Church and among Dissenters. Perhaps the most subtle and most delicately drawn of all her characters are the Rev. Amos Barton in "Scenes of Clerical Life," and the Rev. Rufus Lyon in "Felix Holt." The former of these is an interesting, even a romantic character; the latter is not in the least so; but they are to be classed together because they are both types of a class, and because of the truth with which their whole natures are shown to us. Again, how admirably done are Mr. Tryan in "Janet's Repentance," in the extreme evangelical school, and the dignified rector of the old school in "Felix Holt," than whom no two characters could be more distinct; and then Mr. Irwine in "Adam Bede," a sort of mean between the two, is finely discriminated from either. Her clerical gallery is very large; and in it she has exhibited not only her wide and generous sympathies, but also that rare quality in a novelist, the power of distinguishing characters not stamped by any marked peculiarities. The Dodson Family in "The Mill on the Floss" has, we think, been much overpraised. It is a picture of harsh and vulgar, if not of positively low life, unredeemed, so far as we can see, by any delicacy of touch. There is in it no display of that power of delicate discrimination of character which we have just spoken of; on the contrary, each sister rides her own hobby with an obtrusive consistency which is carried quite to an extreme. Nor are any of the hobbies in the least amusing. Aunt Glegg always coarsely insolent about money, and Aunt Pullet always maundering about her china and her linen, seem to us not humorous, or even farcical. In fact, we think this group forms a striking contrast to the delicacy of

all her clerical portraits. She has certainly achieved her greatest triumphs with parsons and artisans. Her minor characters are uniformly good. She resembles in this a careful actor who studies his by-play. She spares no pains that every part, however slight, should be thoroughly drawn. This is especially noticeable in "Felix Holt," in which the stage is fuller than in any of her previous novels. The valet Christian, the waiting-maid Denner, the Debarrys, father and son,—every one of these is a careful and completed study. In nothing, not even in intellectual power, does George Eliot rise so superior to the ordinary novelists of the day as in the perfect finish which she bestows on all her work.

We have already noticed George Eliot's love of commenting on the motives and actions of her characters, or at least of indulging in reflections directly arising out of them. She acts herself the part of chorus, showing us how and why things go wrong, and improving the occasion generally, all in a style somewhat more explicit than that of the chorus of old time. In the hands of most writers this would become tedious; it is not so in her hands. On the contrary, as is the case with Thackeray, though these comments may detract from the animation of the story, they give breadth and power to the whole work.

A critic, in the last number of "Macmillan's Magazine," dwells on this characteristic of George Eliot's writings. He upholds it as a rare excellence, and says that only in virtue of it can novels yield us what they ought to yield, namely, "criticism of life." This may be true; but the writer speaks of the scope and power of George Eliot's "moral reflections" in language which partakes of that exaggeration of praise with which the majority of our critics are doing their best to spoil a great writer. He selects the following "specimen reflection" as especially marvellous:—

"Our lives make a moral tradition for our individual selves, as the life of mankind at large makes a moral tradition for the race, and to have once acted greatly seems a reason why we should always be noble. But Tito was feeling the effect of an opposite tradition: he had won no memories of self-conquest and perfect faithfulness from which he could have a sense of falling."

Beside this may be placed the following in the same style:—

"And it has been well believed through many ages that the beginning of compunction is the beginning of a new life; that the mind which sees itself blameless may be called dead in trespasses—in trespasses on the love of others, in trespasses on their weaknesses, in trespasses on all those great claims which are the image of our own need."

We quote these passages, both because of the over-praise we have alluded to, and because they serve to illustrate the power of George Eliot's style. There is nothing in either of them very new or striking. The thought in the former is merely that action, of whatever kind it be, reacts upon a man's nature; and the thought in the latter is merely that very self-satisfied people are apt to be uncharitable. Thackeray would have put them both in two lines. But that is not George Eliot's way. She uses her splendid diction to give dignity to the thought. There is a pomp and stateliness about the above sentences which prevents the reader from discovering that he has heard the same thing a hundred times before. Carried away by the sounding words, he is at once impressed with the profundity of a reflection in which, if translated into homely language, he would recognise a very old friend. We are far from making this matter of reproach against George Eliot. If not in the very highest or purest style of art, it is at least a perfectly justifiable device. George Eliot is rarely gifted with

a commanding eloquence, and no writer could be expected to relinquish the power which such a gift confers. And if at times she presses it a little too far, no one would be hasty to judge her. Only, when the thing is forced upon our notice, it is right to distinguish between depth of thought and force of expression.

We have before remarked on George Eliot's tendency towards improbable incident. To the same cause—namely, an inability to work out a plot—may be ascribed the unnaturalness of action which sometimes alienates our sympathy from her best characters. Their proceedings are dictated by motives so utterly inadequate that we have no feeling for them, or with them, in what they do. This fault—as indeed most of the faults in art which can be brought against her—is conspicuous in “Felix Holt,” and for the plain reason that, in “Felix Holt,” she has made her most elaborate endeavour after artistic completeness. Almost all the leading characters in that book act unnaturally, and the finish-off is a climax of absurdity. No woman in Esther's position, and with Esther's feelings, would have gone to visit the Transomes. Delicacy, not less than common sense, would have made such a step impossible. It is impossible to measure the force of a woman's love; but very few, we think, would throw away a fortune justly her own, in order to gratify a wild and irrational caprice on the part of a lover, to whose faults, moreover, she is by no means blind. Certainly no woman of Esther's temperament would have done so, and therefore we feel instinctively that the result will be a dismal failure. Esther, with a large family living on £100 a year, we feel to be an utter blunder. In taking the absurd step she does, she has been false to her own character, and nothing but unhappiness to herself and

her husband can ensue. And what can be said of Harold Transome's position at the close of the book? He is represented as living on quite happily and contentedly in the possession of wealth not his own; nay, worse than that, which he knows to be the property of a woman whom he has deliberately made love to for the sake of this wealth, and who has refused him. It is not worth while to point out that Harold's powerful and hard character renders this peculiarly impossible to him; no man could stoop to such a life. We can recall few things in fiction more unnatural or absurd. But all absurdities are as nothing compared with the absurdities of Felix Holt himself. One can imagine Esther giving up a fortune for love of him; but why should he have demanded this sacrifice? From what motive did his resolution to refuse riches spring? All men can sympathise with a St. Francis accepting poverty as his Heaven-destined bride; but what affinity has the foolish petulance of Felix Holt with such emotions as those which moved the saint of Assisi? A reviewer in the "Westminster" says, that if George Eliot's doctrine as to this choice of her hero is to be taken in its ordinary meaning, it is "simply mischievous." We believe it is intended so to be taken; and we agree with the reviewer in thinking that, if it shall ever have any effect, such effect can be for mischief only. As a matter of fact, it will, of course, have no effect whatever; but this unnatural folly is a serious blemish. There is no adequate motive for such a proceeding, and therefore the book is, so far, unnatural. The man who commits this extravagance is, inferentially at least, praised and honoured for it, and therefore a false standard of right and wrong is to this extent inculcated. Many instances of a similar nature might be given from George Eliot's novels, but this one is perhaps the most marked; and

at all events it is quite sufficient to illustrate our criticism.

Thus far we have considered George Eliot's powers as a writer generally, and especially her powers as a writer of fiction. But her ardent admirers put forth claims on her behalf far beyond this scope. They insist that she should be looked upon as the teacher of the age; and that in the sense in which all the supreme writers of fiction, whether in prose or verse, may be said to be teachers. Now, taking this point of view, the first question which occurs is, whether she is in her fitting pulpit?—or, in other words, Has the novel-writer any title to higher aims than the amusement of readers? Sydney Smith expresses a pretty clear opinion on the point:—"The main question as to a novel is—did it amuse? Were you surprised at dinner coming so soon? Did you mistake eleven for ten, and twelve for eleven? Were you too late to dress? and did you sit up beyond the usual hour? If a novel produces these effects, it is good; if it does not—story, language, love, scandal itself cannot save it. *It is only meant to please*; and it must do that, or it does nothing." But this doctrine, especially the last sentence, is too extreme for the present day. We are, as we so often hear, an "earnest" generation; and crave for instruction at all seasons, and in divers places. Admirers of Carlyle will remember how strongly he objects on this score to the Waverley Novels:—"Not profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for edification, for building up or elevating in any shape! The sick heart will find no healing here, the darkly struggling heart no guidance; the heroic, that is in all men, no divine awakening voice." We cannot now discuss the truth of this charge; we refer to it merely as showing that such high themes are now demanded from novelists. It is not

meant that our novels are to be sermons in disguise, even though the disguise be worn with the grace of Miss Edgeworth. But it is meant that trivial aims and light emotions are sufficing motives in no work of fiction; that novels which hope to last should rest upon the permanent interests of mankind, and reach the depths of the heart. Literature has higher purposes than that of merely amusing; and if such purposes belong to the dramatist, why not to the novelist likewise? And especially at the present time, when novel-writing, like the rod of Moses, has swallowed up almost every other form of literature.

Adopting, then, this point of view, and granting to George Eliot the appropriateness of her position as a teacher and moral instructor, the question remains, What is the purport of her teaching? or, in other words, What subjects does she touch upon, and how does she handle them? Foremost, and most striking of all, is her treatment of religion. She does not go out of her way to seek this subject, but when it does occur, she treats it freely, with knowledge and experience, and with perfect frankness. The following quotation reminds one of the "Northern Farmer:"—

"I don't understand these new sort o' doctrines. When Mr. Barton comes to see me, he talks about nothing but my sins and my need o' marcy. Now, Mr. Hackit, I've never been a sinner. From the fust beginning, when I went into service, I al'ys did my duty by my emplyers. I was as good a wife as any's in the county—never aggravated my husband. The cheese-factor used to say my cheese was al'ys to be depended on. I've known women, as their cheeses swelled a shame to be seen, when their husbands had counted on the cheese-money to make up their rent; and yet they'd three gowns to my one. If I'm not to be saved, I know a many as are in a bad way. But it's well for me as I can't go to church any longer, for if th' old singers are

to be done away with, there'll be nothing left as it was in Mr. Patten's time; and what's more, I hear you've settled to pull the church down and build it up new?"

Equally natural, yet entirely different in feeling, is this:—

"Mrs. Raynor had been reading about the lost sheep, and the joy there is in heaven over the sinner that repenteth. Surely the eternal love she believed in through all the sadness of her lot would not leave her child to wander farther and farther into the wilderness till there was no turning—the child so lovely, so pitiful to others, so good, till she was goaded into sin by woman's bitterest sorrows! Mrs. Raynor had her faith and her spiritual comforts, though she was not in the least evangelical, and knew nothing of doctrinal zeal. I fear most of Mr. Tryan's hearers would have considered her destitute of saving knowledge, and I am quite sure she had no well-defined views of justification. Nevertheless, she read her Bible a great deal, and thought she found divine lessons there—how to bear the cross meekly, and be merciful. Let us hope that there is a saving ignorance, and that Mrs. Raynor was justified without knowing exactly how."

And then compare with these as in a loftier vein of thought:—

"His mind was destitute of that dread which has been erroneously decried as if it were nothing higher than a man's animal care for his own skin: that awe of the Divine Nemesis which was felt by religious pagans, and, though it took a more positive form under Christianity, is still felt by the mass of mankind simply as a vague fear at anything which is called wrong-doing. Such terror of the unseen is so far above mere sensual cowardice that it will annihilate that cowardice: it is the initial recognition of a moral law restraining desire, and checks the hard bold scrutiny of imperfect thought into obligations which can never be proved to have any sanctity in the absence of feeling."

"Nevertheless, Evangelicalism had brought into palpable

existence and operation in Milby society that idea of duty, that recognition of something to be lived for beyond the mere satisfaction of self, which is to the moral life what the addition of a great central ganglion is to animal life. No man can begin to mould himself on a faith or an idea without rising to a higher order of experience : a principle of subordination, of self-mastery, has been introduced into his nature ; he is no longer a mere bundle of impressions, desires, and impulses. Whatever might be the weaknesses of the ladies who pruned the luxuriance of their lace and ribbons, cut out garments for the poor, distributed tracts, quoted Scripture, and defined the true gospel, they had learned this—that there was a divine work to be done in life, a rule of goodness higher than the opinion of their neighbours ; and if a notion of the heaven in reserve for themselves was a little too prominent, yet the theory of fitness for that heaven consisted in purity of heart, in Christlike compassion, in the subduing of selfish desires. They might give the name of piety to much that was only puritanic egoism ; they might call many things sin that were not sin ; but they had at least the feeling that sin was to be avoided and resisted, and colour-blindness, which may mistake drab for scarlet, is better than total blindness which sees no distinction of colour at all. Miss Rebecca Linnet, in quiet attire, with a somewhat excessive solemnity of countenance, teaching at the Sunday school, visiting the poor, and striving after a standard of purity and goodness, had surely more moral loveliness than in those flaunting peony-days, when she had no other model than the costumes of the heroines in the circulating library. Miss Eliza Pratt, listening in rapt attention to Mr. Tryan's evening lecture, no doubt found evangelical channels for vanity and egoism ; but she was clearly in moral advance of Miss Phipps giggling under her feathers at old Mr. Crew's peculiarities of enunciation. And even elderly fathers and mothers, with minds, like Mrs. Linnet's, too tough to imbibe much doctrine, were the better for having their hearts inclined towards the new preacher as a messenger from God. They became ashamed, perhaps, of their evil tempers, ashamed of their worldliness, ashamed of their trivial, futile past. The first condition of human goodness

is something to love ; the second, something to reverence. And this latter precious gift was brought to Milby by Mr. Tryan and Evangelicalism."

This knowledge of the various forms of religious feeling to be found in the heart of man, and this sympathy with them all, enhance greatly the power of George Eliot's writings. It would be well if such knowledge and sympathy were possessed in the same measure by our professed religious teachers. This present age is in no real sense of the word sceptical, yet we suspect there has seldom been a time in which there was a greater gulf fixed between the clergy and the educated laity. Our clerical dignitaries are startled now and again by some outspoken heresy ; they would be a good deal more startled were they made aware how much of what they call heresy is unspoken, merely because it has become an ordinary habit of thought. They are absorbed in their noisy contests—believing sincerely that matters of vital import are at stake ; unconscious that the great bulk of the laity looks on with indifference, save when indignation is roused by some act of clerical intolerance more heinous than common, yet also with a feeling of sorrowful regret, that between them and their teachers there is no sympathy, that to their teachers they can look for no guidance. It is full time the clergy should look to it, when laymen find more that is akin to their modes of thought on religious subjects in the writings of novelists like Thackeray or George Eliot, than in all the teaching of all the churches. In this particular, George Eliot's subtlety, liberality, sympathy with mankind, and fervour of feeling, deserve the heartiest recognition. Few can hope to rival her powers ; but all might seek to imitate the spirit in which she approaches these themes.

When any question of morality arises, George Eliot's tone is not less lofty than in treating of matters more peculiarly religious. Her point of view is always pure and high-minded. Her comments and criticisms, either upon the actual transactions of the tale, or upon life generally, are penetrated with a striking nobility of sentiment. But the case is different with her characters in action. Her precepts may be admirable ; her example is not so. We hardly know how to account for this ; but the same thing is remarkable in other writers, as, for example, in Dickens, with whom the disposition to high-flown sentiment is strong. When this sentiment comes into harsh collision with the facts of life, unnaturalness, it may be immorality, of action is the frequent result. George Eliot cannot be called a sentimental writer ; but in her hands high moral theories applied to ordinary realities lead to similar results. Perhaps the sentiment in the one case, the moral doctrine in the other, may be too bright and good for human nature's daily food, and therefore prove at the critical moment an insufficient power ; but however this may be, neither of them necessarily, nor even commonly, is associated with rectitude of conduct.

Whatever may be the explanation, the fact is certain. It is not too much to say that George Eliot's characters rarely or never act from principle. They are actuated sometimes by real and fervent religious feeling, often by noble and lofty sentiment ; but principle, in the proper sense of the word, very seldom has power over them. The existence of such a motive is forgotten in her psychology. The only instance we can remember of any of her characters acting from rational conviction is when Romola, persuaded by the exhortation of Savonarola, gives up her intention of flying from her husband's home. This refusal

to recognise principle as a cause of action is common enough among women, both in their walk and conversation, and (in the case of such of them as are authors) in their writings. Miss Yonge is a striking instance of it. But a more masculine power of thought might have been expected from George Eliot.

Much in the same way there is in her writings a noticeable disregard of the secondary principles of morality. Unless her characters are animated by the most exalted motives, they are without any influence sufficient to restrain them from serious offences. We do not, of course, mean that George Eliot has drawn no ordinary characters—influenced often by commonplace motives. What we mean is, that the principles to which we have referred are not allowed sufficient scope on the whole—that they have not their proper place among the motives which influence human action generally—that the power they have to restrain when religion is absent is not duly acknowledged. Honour, for example, the most powerful perhaps of those secondary principles, has no part in her drama. There is a strong instance of this in “Adam Bede.” Arthur Donnithorne is represented as a young English gentleman in the best sense of the word, thoroughly generous-hearted and honourable. And yet he seduces a girl, the niece of a farmer of the better class, whom he has known all his life, and with whose family, the principal tenants on the estate, he has all his life been on terms of condescending intimacy, as befits the young squire. The seduction is peculiarly bad, because it is carried out by real love-making,—marriage, if not actually promised, being prominently brought before the girl’s mind. When found out by Adam Bede, he takes leave of Hetty in a very cool letter, the purport of which is to assure her that the marriage which he had led her to expect

could never take place. He leaves her without the smallest thought of or provision for the future, and is, when away, greatly cheered by the intelligence that she is about to marry Adam, who also had been one of the lowly friends of his youth. There are, of course, many men who would have done all this quite coolly, but Arthur Donnithorne could not. He would not, indeed, have been restrained by religion, nor by any very deep conceptions of morality, for neither one influence nor the other had much hold upon him; but he would have been restrained by a feeling of honour. The Arthur Donnithorne of the book would have felt that he was not behaving "like a gentleman," and that would have been enough to give him pause. It would have made him hasten from temptation when he saw that Hetty was dreaming of marriage, and was therefore likely to fall. But in George Eliot's treatment it is assumed that, the highest motives being absent, no lower motive could have had sufficient power. Now this is untrue to nature, and therefore makes the whole character inconsistent and unreal. The same mistake runs through all her writings. It is a mistake which would be committed by a certain order of preachers; but it rests upon an inadequate view of human nature,—leads to a false representation of life. The world would be in a very bad way were it not for the authority of those lower principles of morality which George Eliot, at any crisis of action, utterly disregards. And the extremes of wrong-doing into which her characters, inconsistently with their natures, are often hurried, arise mainly from this source. For a teacher of morality—that being the light in which we are now regarding George Eliot—thus to undervalue the influence of those principles, is a grievous blunder, and a blunder of a directly pernicious tendency.

The relations between the sexes, in one aspect or another, occupy a prominent place in all novels. The majority preserve the beaten track of falling in love, courtship under difficulties of various sorts, ending, as the case may be, in marriage or in some untoward catastrophe. Others begin with matrimonial felicity, and seek to awake an interest by setting forth the troubles to which that felicity may be exposed; while some, avoiding matrimony altogether, narrate a tale of vice or crime, as in "*Clarissa Harlowe*" or "*Rosamond Gray*." George Eliot has taken up this theme in many of its aspects. With her the ordinary love-story is not very frequent, nor always successful. The loves of Esther and Felix Holt do not enlist our sympathies. We doubt the truth to nature in making a girl like Esther be subjugated by a man like Felix Holt,—clever, indeed, but coarse, overbearing, and without genius sufficient to justify his unpleasant eccentricities. Her taste must have revolted from him; while her acute intellect would have detected the pretentiousness of his nature, and the want of any sound basis for his opinions. Of the two, Harold Transome, with all his faults, has far more reality about him. Felix Holt is precisely the character a woman would create, meaning him to be very fine; but he is not the man a woman would readily fall in love with. On the other hand, nothing can be more purely beautiful than the episode of Rufus Lyon and Esther's mother, nothing more deeply true than the growth of the affection of Dinah Morris for Adam Bede. No reader can forget the scene in which the young Methodist confesses the power of an earthly love, and the author's passionate comment:—"What greater thing is there for two human souls than to feel that they are joined for life,—to strengthen each other in all labour, to rest on each other in all sorrow, to

minister to each other in all pain, to be one with each other in silent unspeakable memories at the last parting?"

It is matter for regret that a writer who can thus portray the beauty of romance and the purity of affection should ever have stooped to themes less lovely. But the pleasant aspect of the relations between man and woman is not that which George Eliot loves best to look upon. She dislikes those relations as at present constituted. She is the champion of woman against the selfishness and oppression of man. "God was cruel when He made woman" is the wild exclamation of one of her characters, with which the writer evidently sympathises.

A writer animated by such a spirit naturally turns away from cheerful views. Accordingly the less fortunate of the relations between the sexes—seduction, unhappy marriage, breach of the marriage vow—are of constant occurrence in her writings. What may be the exact merits of this "teaching" we are at a loss to discover. To us it seems purely pernicious.

We do not deny that these, like any of the other crimes or calamities of life, may be proper subjects of fiction. But to make them so, they must be treated with studious reserve and delicacy, and they must be exceptional—the result of overmastering circumstance. George Eliot fulfils neither of these conditions. So far from approaching these matters with reserve she enters into every detail with an indecorous and unpleasing minuteness. Thus, in "Adam Bede" we have an elaborate analysis of the mental process by which a silly girl is carried on to her fall. It is executed with wonderful skill; but it is neither a pleasant nor a profitable subject for meditation, and might well have been spared. But, worse than this, we have forced on us minute descriptions of the physical steps

which lead to the result—pictures of Hetty's pouting lips and swimming eyes, of the two wandering together in the wood, etc., for all which we can imagine no defence. It is disagreeable to recall these things; but censure, especially on such a ground as this, must be justified. And this style of writing seems to us deserving of the severest censure. It is not, indeed, openly indecent; but it is not the less evil because it is suggestive only. For ourselves we think it but the worse on that account, and of the two prefer the frank coarseness of such scenes as the adventure of Tom Jones with Lady Bellaston. How differently is the same theme handled in "The Heart of Midlothian"!—our feelings and sympathies far more strongly stirred, and yet not an allusion which can offend good taste. Elsewhere in George Eliot's writings, especially in the third volume of "The Mill on the Floss," there is a certain tone of sensuality, less disagreeable than the suggestive style, but still quite unworthy of her:—

" 'O may I get this rose?' said Maggie, making a great effort to say something, and dissipate the burning sense of irretrievable confession. 'I think I am quite wicked with roses—I like to gather them and smell them till they have no scent left.'

"Stephen was mute: he was incapable of putting a sentence together, and Maggie bent her arm a little upward towards the large half-opened rose that had attracted her. Who has not felt the beauty of a woman's arm?—the unspeakable suggestions of tenderness that lie in the dimpled elbow and all the varied gently-lessening curves down to the delicate wrist, with its tiniest, almost imperceptible nicks in the firm softness. A woman's arm touched the soul of a great sculptor two thousand years ago, so that he wrought an image of it for the Parthenon which moves us still as it clasps lovingly the time-worn marble of a headless trunk. Maggie's was such an arm as that—and it had the warm tints of life.

"A mad impulse seized on Stephen; he darted towards the arm, and showered kisses on it, clasping the wrist."

Perhaps even worse than this treatment of these matters is the way in which they are introduced. They are not represented as exceptional, or as the result of extraordinary circumstances; they are brought before us almost as things of course. We have already alluded to Arthur Donnithorne and Hester Sorrell. Another instance of what we mean is to be found in "Janet's Repentance." There Mr. Tryan tells how, in the days of "dissipation" at Oxford, he "took a girl away from her home;" and he tells it as no out-of-the-way occurrence. Now, such an occurrence in real life would be very much out of the way. Seduction of women in that rank by men in that rank, is, in spite of all that sentimental writers say, a very uncommon thing. Of course it does happen; but it is rare, and to represent it as an ordinary event is false in art and wrong in morals. A more flagrant instance still is the conduct of Mrs. Transome in "Felix Holt." A woman of high birth, occupying a good position, and raised above low temptation both by culture and natural ability, is there represented as having stooped to a country attorney—a coarse vulgar man, wearing "black satin waistcoats," with "fat white hands," and a "scented handkerchief." That he was a brute as well, who would make money out of this connection, and enrich himself by keeping her in comparative poverty, a woman like Mrs. Transome would have foreseen from the first. And this is suddenly opened upon the reader without any attempt to account for it,—as in the ordinary course of life, as a thing likely to happen any day in the society around us. There is no surprise expressed about it; no sense of degradation indicated; nothing like repentance or regret for the sin itself; the only feeling aroused is shame at being

found out. The fact that punishment follows does not at all redeem the immorality of such treatment. No one is moved by this ; for the smallest experience of life shows that the punishment of wrong-doing, here at least, is a mere accident—sometimes utterly disproportioned to the offence, often never coming at all. The morality of a representation of vice or crime is determined by the circumstances in which the act is done, and the motives which animate the actors ; it is not at all affected by whether or not retribution is brought in at the last.

No one would object to the charity which pervades George Eliot's writings. Her wide sympathies, and the generosity with which she appreciates the good in things evil, are great sources of her power, and command hearty admiration. But these qualities are very different from a tendency to make evil prevail over good ; and *that* is what we are forced to urge against her. To represent men and women as immaculate would be childish ; to make some almost uniformly good, and others invariably evil, would be unnatural ; but, on the other hand, to show noble natures yielding to temptations unworthy of them, or influenced by motives over which they should have easy command, is to make light of the distinction between right and wrong, to make the downward path appear more headlong even than it really is, and thus, while to excuse error, also to discourage effort. It is terribly true that circumstances go far to shape character ; but a moralist should take good heed not to give them more power than they really have, and especially not to exaggerate the power of trivial circumstance.

Another, and a less painful example of how George Eliot makes a fine nature act, as it were, below itself, is to be found in "The Mill on the Floss." Every

one remembers the noble creation of Maggie Tulliver: "a creature full of eager, passionate longings for all that was beautiful and good ; thirsty for knowledge ; with an ear straining after dreamy music that died away and would not come near to her ; with a blind unconscious yearning for something that would link together the wonderful impressions of this mysterious life, and give her soul a sense of home in it." Her childhood was happy, but her youth was one of hardship and self-discipline. Under these influences she meets, in early womanhood, Mr. Stephen Guest, "a large-headed long-limbed young man," with "a diamond ring, attar of roses, and an air of nonchalant leisure at twelve o'clock in the day;" and after *one* interview with him, in which he neither does nor says anything remarkable, she "shivers" at the notion of his marrying anybody but herself. The next step is his singing to her, and the result of that George Eliot must tell herself:—

"Maggie always tried in vain to go on with her work when music began. She tried harder than ever to-day ; for the thought that Stephen knew how much she cared for his singing was one that no longer roused a merely playful resistance ; and she knew, too, that it was his habit always to stand so that he could look at her. But it was of no use : she soon threw her work down, and all her intentions were lost in the vague state of emotion produced by the inspiring duet—emotion that seemed to make her at once strong and weak : strong for all enjoyment, weak for all resistance. When the strain passed into the minor, she half-started from her seat with the sudden thrill of that change. Poor Maggie ! she looked very beautiful *when her soul was being played on in this way by the inexorable power of sound*. You might have seen the slightest perceptible quivering through her whole frame, as she leaned a little forward, clasping her hands as if to steady herself ; while her eyes dilated and brightened into that wide-open, childish expression of wondering delight, which always came back in her happiest moments. . . .

"Stephen rolled out, with saucy energy—

'Shall I, wasting in despair,
Die because a woman's fair?'

and seemed to make all the air in the room alive with a new influence. Lucy, always proud of what Stephen did, went towards the piano with laughing admiring looks at him; and Maggie, in spite of her resistance to the spirit of the song and to the singer, *was taken hold of and shaken by the invisible influence—was borne along by a wave too strong for her.*"

Shortly after this astonishing musical effect a dancing-party takes place, at which he speaks to her "with that glance and tone of subdued tenderness which young dreams create to themselves in the summer woods when low cooing voices fill the air"—whatever that may mean; and at the same entertainment there occurs the scene in the conservatory which we have before quoted. After this there is but one more interview, and then comes the climax:—

"He was looking into her deep, deep eyes—far off and mysterious as the starlit blackness, and yet very near and timidly loving. Maggie sat perfectly still—perhaps for moments, perhaps for minutes—until the helpless trembling had ceased, and there was a warm glow on her cheek.

"'The man is waiting—he has taken the cushions,' she said. 'Will you go and tell him?'

"'What shall I tell him?' said Stephen, almost in a whisper. He was looking at the lips now.

"Maggie made no answer.

"'Let us go,' Stephen murmured, entreatingly, rising and taking her hand to raise her too. 'We shall not be long together.'

"And they went. Maggie felt that she was being led down the garden among the roses, being helped with firm tender care into the boat, having the cushion and cloak arranged for her feet, and her parasol opened for her (which she had forgotten)—all by this stronger presence that seemed to bear her along without any act of her own will, like the

added self which comes with the sudden exalting influence of a strong tonic—and she felt nothing else. Memory was excluded.

“They glided rapidly along, Stephen rowing, helped by the backward-flowing tide, past the Tofton trees and houses—on between the silent sunny fields and pastures, which seemed filled with a natural joy that had no reproach for theirs. The breath of the young, unwearied day, the delicious rhythmic dip of the oars, the fragmentary song of a passing bird heard now and then, as if it were only the overflowing of brim-full gladness, the sweet solitude of a twofold consciousness that was mingled into one by that grave untiring gaze which need not be averted—what else could there be in their minds for the first hour? Some low, subdued languid exclamation of love came from Stephen from time to time, as he went on rowing idly, half automatically: otherwise, they spoke no word; for what could words have been but an inlet to thought? and thought did not belong to that enchanted haze in which they were enveloped—it belonged to the past and the future that lay outside the haze.”

The author has laboured to throw a halo of romance round this story; but even her genius cannot hide its innate absurdity. Under ordinary circumstances, a woman such as Maggie Tulliver would not have been likely to fall in love with a man like Stephen Guest. But when to do so implied a violation of all propriety, and even decency, our sympathies are repelled by the inadequacy of the influences which lead to such an act. Many women might have been hurried into this wrong-doing even by the vulgar fascinations of Stephen Guest; but not Maggie Tulliver. Her passionate and unruly nature might have yielded under other conditions, but not to him. She never could have dreamed that *he* would gratify her “thirst for all knowledge,” or would “give her soul a sense of home in this mysterious life.” He can make no appeal to her intellect or her imagination, to her higher nature

in any way; he does nothing but sing to her and row her about in a boat. Second-rate music; and what George Eliot calls the "rhythmic movement of the oars," or, when the agony deepens, "the delicious rhythmic dip of the oars;" roses, cooing voices, cushions, parasols timeously opened,—such are the influences which have power to silence gratitude and honour in a nature like that of Maggie Tulliver, and before their irresistible charm she becomes "lost to life and use and name and fame!" When they are not at the piano or on the river, they are wandering among roses "in a dim, dreamy state," or "under the drooping green of laburnums." In all George Eliot's tales, the passion of love is presented too exclusively in its physical aspect. Romola herself is at once overpowered by the attraction of a comely face. But in "The Mill on the Floss" the love-making is altogether through the senses. Even the sentimentalism of Bulwer is better than this. His Godolphins and Maltraverses make some effort to appeal to the mind.

"The Mill on the Floss" abounds with instances of George Eliot's failure to hit the true note of connection between circumstances and conduct. Maggie Tulliver yields in the first instance without even a struggle. We are told indeed that her struggles are terrible, but she never *does* anything to assist her efforts. Then again her refusal to marry Stephen, after the whole mischief is done by her running or rather rowing off with him, is a strong example of the false morality to be met with in George Eliot's works. There is no reason for this resolution; every consideration of what is due to herself as well as to others is the other way. It springs merely from irrational impulse. She shows just as much want of self-control after the elopement as she did before it—forgets what

she owes to her own reputation and the reputation of her family, not less than she forgot what she owed to the feelings of her cousin. There may be great selfishness in self-sacrifice. The true lesson would have been to make her bear the natural consequences of her conduct, showing how the fact of being compelled to secure her own gratification itself formed part of her punishment; to elevate a selfish and unavailing renunciation into a sort of martyrdom is altogether false teaching. People can never really redeem error by acting like fools.

It would not be difficult to show in George Eliot's writings traces of faults very prevalent among writers of a lower grade. But the limits of our space forbid this, and we gladly spare ourselves the ungrateful task. It is right, moreover, to observe that from the more serious blemishes we have indicated her earlier writings are exempt. The "Scenes of Clerical Life" are sorrowful pictures indeed, but they are true to nature and free from any taint of impurity. In the delicacy and beauty of Mr. Gilfil's love-story we think her genius has achieved its most perfect triumph. "Romola," deficient in interest as a story, is truly noble in tone. There is no reason, therefore, to suppose that the graver faults on which we have dwelt so long cannot be laid aside at will. Deficiency in constructive power would seem to make George Eliot's entire success as a novelist doubtful, but this is a slight drawback. She has it easily within her reach to win no passing reputation, and gain, with general consent, a place among the classics of the English language, and she owes it to her rare genius to consider well, whether some sobriety in incident, a closer truth to nature, a greater respect for ordinary morality, would not aid her in the achievement of this great ambition.

THACKERAY.¹

THAT Mr. Thackeray was born in India in 1811; that he was educated at Charter House and Cambridge; that he left the University after a few terms' residence without a degree; that he devoted himself at first to art; that in pursuit thereof he lived much abroad "for study, for sport, for society;" that about the age of twenty-five, married, without fortune, without a profession, he began the career which has made him an English classic; that he pursued that career steadily till his death,—all this has, within the last few weeks, been told again and again.

It is a common saying that the lives of men of letters are uneventful. In an obvious sense this is true. They are seldom called on to take part in events which move the world, in politics, in the conflicts of nations; while the exciting incidents of sensation novels are as rare in their lives as in the lives of other men. But men of letters are in no way exempt from the changes and chances of fortune; and the story of these, and of the effects which came from them, must possess an interest for all. Prosperity succeeded by cruel reverses; happiness, and the long prospect of it, suddenly clouded; a hard fight, with aims as yet uncertain,

¹ This paper was the joint production of Mr. Lancaster and Dr. John Brown.—[Reprinted from the "North British Review," No. 79. February 1864.]

and powers unknown; success bravely won; the austerer victory of failure manfully borne; these things make a life truly eventful, and make the story of that life full of interest and instruction. They will all fall to be narrated when Mr. Thackeray's life shall be written; we have only now to do with them so far as they illustrate his literary career, of which we propose to lay before our readers an account as complete as is in our power, and as impartial as our warm admiration for the great writer we have lost will allow.

Many readers know Mr. Thackeray only as the Thackeray of "Vanity Fair," "Pendennis," "The Newcomes," and "The Virginians," the quadrilateral of his fame, as they were called by the writer of an able and kindly notice in the "Illustrated News." The four volumes of "Miscellanies" published in 1857, though his reputation had been then established, are less known than they should be. But Mr. Thackeray wrote much which does not appear even in the *Miscellanies*; and some account of his early labours may not be unacceptable to our readers.

His first attempt was ambitious. He became connected, as editor, and also, we suspect, in some measure, as proprietor, with a weekly literary journal, the fortunes of which were not prosperous. We believe the journal to have been one which bore the imposing title of "The National Standard and Journal of Literature, Science, Music, Theatricals, and the Fine Arts." Thackeray's editorial reign began about the 19th Number, after which he seems to have done a good deal of work—reviews, letters, criticisms, and verses. As the "National Standard" is now hardly to be met with out of the British Museum, we give a few specimens of these first efforts. There is a mock sonnet by W. Wordsworth, illustrative of a drawing of Braham in stage nautical costume, standing by a theatrical

sea-shore ; in the background an Israelite, with the clothes'-bag and triple hat of his ancient race ; and in the sky, constellation-wise, appears a Jew's harp, with a chaplet of bays round it. The sonnet runs :—

“ Say not that Judah's harp hath lost its tone,
Or that no bard hath found it where it hung
Broken and lonely, voiceless and unstrung,
Beside the sluggish streams of Babylon :
Slowman¹ repeats the strain his fathers sung,
And Judah's burning lyre is Braham's own !
Behold him here ! Here view the wondrous man,
Majestical and lonely, as when first,
In music on a wondering world he burst,
And charm'd the ravish'd ears of Sov'reign Anne.²
Mark well the form, O reader ! nor deride
The sacred symbol—Jew's harp glorified—
Which, circled with a blooming wreath, is seen
Of verdant bays ; and thus are typified
The pleasant music, and the baize of green,
Whence issues out at eve Braham with front serene.”

We have here the germ of a style in which Thackeray became famous, though the humour of attributing this nonsense to Wordsworth, and of making Braham coeval with Queen Anne, is not now very plain. There is a yet more characteristic touch in a review of Montgomery's “ Woman the Angel of Life,” winding up with a quotation of some dozen lines, the order of which he says has been reversed by the printer, but as they read quite as well the one way as the other, he does not think it worth while to correct the mistake ! A comical tale, called the “ Devil's Wager,” afterwards reprinted in the Paris Sketch-Book, also appeared in

¹ “ It is needless to speak of the eminent vocalist and improvisatore. He nightly delights a numerous and respectable audience at the Cider Cellar ; and while on this subject I cannot refrain from mentioning the kindness of Mr. Evans, the worthy proprietor of that establishment. *N.B.*—A *table-d'hôte* every Friday.”—W. WORDSWORTH.

² “ Mr. Braham made his first appearance in England in the reign of Queen Anne.”—W. W.

the "National Standard," with a capital woodcut, representing the devil as sailing through the air, dragging after him the fat Sir Roger de Rollo by means of his tail, which is wound round Sir Roger's neck. The idea of this tale is characteristic. The venerable knight already in the other world, has made a foolish bet with the devil, involving very seriously his future prospects there, which he can only win by persuading some of his relatives on earth to say an Ave for him. He fails to obtain this slight boon from a kinsman successor for obvious reasons; and from a beloved niece, owing to a musical lover whose serenading quite puts a stop to her devotional exercises; and succeeds at last, only when, giving up all hope from compassion or generosity, he appeals by a pious fraud to the selfishness of a brother and a monk. The story ends with a very Thackerian touch:—"The moral of this story will be given in several successive numbers;" the last three words are in the Sketch-Book changed into "the second edition."

Perhaps best of all is a portrait of Louis Philippe, presenting the Citizen King under the Robert Macaire aspect, the adoption and popularity of which Thackeray so carefully explains and illustrates in his Essay on "Caricatures and Lithography in Paris." Below the portrait are these lines, not themselves very remarkable, but in which, especially in the allusion to Snobs by the destined enemy of the race, we catch glimpses of the future:—

"Like 'the king in the parlour' he's fumbling his money,
 Like 'the queen in the kitchen' his speech is all honey,
 Except when he talks it, like Emperor Nap,
 Of his wonderful feats at Fleurus and Jemappe;
 But alas! all his zeal for the multitude's gone,
 And of no numbers thinking except Number One!
 No huzzas greet his coming, no patriot club licks
 The hand of 'the best of created republics:'

He stands in Paris, as you see him before ye,
Little more than a snob. That's an end of the story."

The journal seems to have been an attempt to substitute vigorous and honest criticism of books and of art for the partiality and slipslop, general then, and now not perhaps quite unknown. It failed, however, partly, it may be, from the inexperience of its managers, but doubtless still more from the want of the capital necessary to establish anything of the sort in the face of similar journals of old standing. People get into a habit of taking certain periodicals unconsciously, as they take snuff. "The National Standard," etc. etc., came into existence on the 5th January 1833, and ceased to be on the 1st February 1834.

His subsequent writings contain several allusions to this misadventure; from some of which we would infer that the break-down of the journal was attended with circumstances more unpleasant than mere literary failure. Mr. Adolphus Simcoe,¹ when in a bad way from a love of literature and drink, completed his ruin by purchasing and conducting for six months that celebrated miscellany called the "Lady's Lute," after which time "its chords were rudely snapped asunder, and he who had swept them aside with such joy went forth a wretched and heart-broken man." And in "Lovel the Widower," Mr. Batchelor narrates similar experiences :—

"I daresay I gave myself airs as editor of that confounded "Museum," and proposed to educate the public taste, to diffuse

¹ "Punch," vol. iii. The portrait of Mr. Adolphus, stretched out, "careless diffused,"—seedy, hungry, and diabolical, in his fashionable cheap hat, his dirty white duck trowsers strapped tightly down, as being the mode, and possibly to conceal his bare legs; a half-smoked, probably unsmokeably bad cigar, in his hand, which is lying over the arm of a tavern bench, from whence he is casting a greedy and ruffian eye upon some unseen fellows, supping plenteously and with cheer,—is, for power and drawing, not unworthy of Hogarth.


morality and sound literature throughout the nation, and to pocket a liberal salary in return for my services. I daresay I printed my own sonnets, my own tragedy, my own verses (to a being who shall be nameless, but whose conduct has caused a faithful heart to bleed not a little). I daresay I wrote satirical articles, in which I piqued myself on the fineness of my wit and criticisms, got up for the nonce, out of encyclopædias and biographical dictionaries; so that I would be actually astonished at my own knowledge. I daresay I made a gaby of myself to the world; pray, my good friend, hast thou never done likewise? If thou hast never been a fool, be sure thou wilt never be a wise man."

Silence for a while seems to have followed upon this failure; but in 1836 his first attempt at independent authorship appeared simultaneously in London and Paris. This publication, at a time when he still hoped to make his bread by art, is, like indeed everything he either said or did, so characteristic, and has been so utterly forgotten, that an account of it may not be out of place, perhaps more minute than its absolute merits deserve.

It is a small folio, with six lithographs, slightly tinted, entitled "*Flore et Zephyr, Ballet Mythologique dédié à—par Théophile Wagstaffe.*" Between "à" and "par" on the cover is the exquisite "*Flore*" herself, all alone in some rosy and bedizened bower. She has the old jaded smirk, and, with eyebrows up and eyelids dropt, she is looking down oppressed with modesty and glory. Her nose, which is long, and has a ripe droop, gives to the semicircular smirk of the large mouth, down upon the centre of which it comes in the funniest way, an indescribably sentimental absurdity. Her thin, sinewy arms and large hands are crossed on her breast, and her petticoat stands out like an inverted white tulip—of muslin—out of which come her professional legs, in the only position which human nature never puts its legs into; it is her

special *pose*. Of course, also, you are aware, by that smirk, that look of being looked at, that though alone in maiden meditation in this her bower, and sighing for her Zephyr, she is in front of some thousand pairs of eyes, and under the fire of many double-barrelled lorgnettes, of which she is the focus.

In the first plate, "*La Danse fait ses offrandes sur l'autel de l'harmonie*," in the shapes of Flore and Zephyr coming trippingly to the footlights, and paying no manner of regard to the altar of harmony, represented by a fiddle with an old and dreary face, and a laurel wreath on its head, and very great regard to the unseen but perfectly understood "house." Next is "*Triste et abattu, les séductions des Nymphes le (Zephyr) tentent en vain*," Zephyr looking theatrically sad. Then "*Flore (with one lower extremity at more than a right angle to the other) déplore l'absence de Zephyr*." The man in the orchestra endeavouring to combine business with pleasure, so as to play the flageolet and read his score, and at the same time miss nothing of the deploring, is intensely comic. Next Zephyr has his turn, and *dans un pas seul exprime sa suprême désespoir*—the extremity of despair being expressed by doubling one-leg so as to touch the knee of the other, and then whirling round so as to suggest the regulator of a steam-engine run off. Next is the rapturous reconciliation, when the faithful creature bounds into his arms, and is held up to the house by the waist in the wonted fashion. Then there is "*La Retraite de Flore*," where we find her with her mother and two admirers—Zephyr, of course, not one. This is in Thackeray's strong unflinching line. One lover is a young dandy without forehead or chin, sitting idiotically astride his chair. To him the old lady, who has her slight rouge, too, and is in a homely shawl and muff, having walked, is making faded love. In

the centre is the fair darling herself still on tiptoe, and wrapped up, but not too much, for her *fiacre*. With his back to the comfortable fire, and staring wickedly at her, is the other lover, a big, burly, elderly man, probably well to do on the Bourse, and with a wife and family at home in their beds. The last exhibits "Les délassements de Zephyr." That hard-working and homely personage is resting his arm on the chimney-piece, taking a huge pinch of snuff from the box of a friend, with a refreshing expression of satisfaction, the only bit of nature as yet. A dear little innocent pot-boy, such as only Thackeray knew how to draw, is gazing and waiting upon the two, holding up a tray from the nearest tavern, on which is a great pewter-pot of foaming porter for Zephyr, and a rummer of steaming brandy and water for his friend, who has come in from the cold air. These drawings are lithographed by Edward Morton, son of "Speed the Plough," and are done with that delicate strength and truth for which this excellent but little known artist is always to be praised. In each corner is the monogram , which appears so often afterwards with the M added, and is itself superseded by the well-known pair of spectacles. Thackeray must have been barely five-and-twenty when this was published by Mitchell in Bond Street. It can hardly be said to have sold.

Now it is worth noticing how in this, as always, he ridiculed the ugly and the absurd in truth and pureness. There is, as we may well know, much that is wicked (though not so much as the judging community are apt to think) and miserable in such a life. There is much that a young man and artist might have felt and drawn in depicting it, of which in after years he would be ashamed; but "Théophile Wagstaffe" has done nothing of this. The effect of looking over

these *juvenilia*—these first shafts from that mighty bow, now, alas! unbent—is good, is moral; you are sorry for the hard-wrought slaves; perhaps a little contemptuous towards the idle people who go to see them; and you feel, moreover, that the *Ballet*, as thus done, is ugly as well as bad, is stupid as well as destructive of decency.

His dream of editorship being ended, Mr. Thackeray thenceforward contented himself with the more lowly, but less responsible, position of a contributor, especially to “*Fraser’s Magazine*.” The youth of “*Fraser*” was full of vigour and genius. We know no better reading than its early volumes, unsparing indeed, but brilliant with scholarship and originality and fire. In these days, the staff of that periodical included such men as Maginn, “*Barry Cornwall*,” Coleridge, Carlyle, Hogg, Galt, Theodore Hook, Delta, Gleig, Edward Irving, and, now foremost of them all, Thackeray. The first of the “*Yellowplush Correspondence*” appeared in November 1837. The world should be grateful to Mr. John Henry Skelton, who in that year wrote a book called “*My Book, or the Anatomy of Conduct*,” for to him is owing the existence of Mr. Charles Yellowplush as a critic, and as a narrator of “*fashnable fax and polite annygoats*.” Mr. Yellowplush, on reading Mr. Skelton’s book, saw at once that only a gentleman of his distinguished profession could competently criticise the same; and this was soon succeeded by the wider conviction that the great subject of fashionable life should not be left to any “*common writin creatures*,” but that an authentic picture thereof must be supplied by “*ONE OF US*.” In the words of a note to the first paper, with the initials O. Y., but which it is easy to recognise as the work of Mr. Charles himself without the plush:—“*He who looketh from a tower sees more of the battle than the knights and*

captains engaged in it ; and, in like manner, he who stands behind a fashionable table knows more of society than the guests who sit at the board. It is from this source that our great novel-writers have drawn their experience, retailing the truths which they learned. It is not impossible that Mr. Yellowplush may continue his communications, when we shall be able to present the reader with the only authentic picture of fashionable life which has been given to the world in our time." The idea was not carried out very fully. The only pictures sketched by Mr. Yellowplush were the farce of "Miss Shum's Husband," and the terrible tragedy of "Deuceace," neither of them exactly "pictures of fashionable life." We rather fancy that, in the story of Mr. Deuceace, Mr. Yellowplush was carried away from his original plan, a return to which he found impossible after that wonderful medley of rascality, grim humour, and unrelieved bedevilry of all kinds. But in 1838 he reverted to his original critical tendencies, and demolished all that "The Quarterly" had left of a book which made some noise in its day, called "A Diary Illustrative of the Times of George the Fourth ;" and wrote from his pantry one of the "Epistles to the Literati," expressing his views of Sir Edward Lytton's "Sea Captain," than which we know of no more good-natured, trenchant, and conclusive piece of criticism. All the Yellowplush papers except the first are republished in the Miscellanies.

In 1839, appeared the story of "Catherine," by Ikey Solomon. This story is little known, and it throws us back upon one still less known. In 1832, when Mr. Thackeray was not more than twenty-one, "Elizabeth Brownrigge : a tale," was narrated in the August and September numbers of "Fraser." This tale is dedicated to the author of "Eugene Aram," and the author describes himself as a young man who

has for a length of time applied himself to literature, but entirely failed in deriving any emoluments from his exertions. Depressed by failure he sends for the popular novel of "Eugene Aram" to gain instruction therefrom. He soon discovers his mistake :—

"From the frequent perusal of older works of imagination I had learnt so to weave the incidents of my story as to interest the feelings of the reader in favour of virtue, and to increase his detestation of vice. I have been taught by 'Eugene Aram' to mix vice and virtue up together in such an inextricable confusion as to render it impossible that any preference should be given to either, or that the one, indeed, should be at all distinguishable from the other. . . . In taking my subject from that walk of life to which you had directed my attention, many motives conspired to fix my choice on the heroine of the ensuing tale ; she is a classic personage,—her name has been already 'linked to immortal verse' by the muse of Canning. Besides, it is extraordinary that, as you had commenced a tragedy under the title of 'Eugene Aram,' I had already sketched a burletta with the title of 'Elizabeth Brownrigge.' I had, indeed, in my dramatic piece, been guilty of an egregious and unpardonable error : I had attempted to excite the sympathies of the audience in favour of the murdered apprentices, but your novel has disabused me of so vulgar a prejudice, and, in my present version of her case, all the interest of the reader and all the pathetic powers of the author will be engaged on the side of the murderess."

According to this conception the tale proceeds, with incidents and even names taken directly from the "Newgate Calendar," but rivalling "Eugene Aram" itself in magnificence of diction, absurdity of sentiment, and pomp of Greek quotation. The trial-scene and the speech for the defence are especially well hit off. If "Elizabeth Brownrigge" was written by Thackeray, and the internal evidence seems to us strong, the following is surprising criticism from a

youth of twenty-one—the very Byron and Bulwer age :—

“I am inclined to regard you (the author of ‘Eugene Aram’) as an original discoverer in the world of literary enterprise, and to reverence you as the father of a new ‘*lusus naturæ* school.’ There is no other title by which your manner could be so aptly designated. I am told, for instance, that in a former work, having to paint an adulterer, you described him as belonging to the class of country curates, among whom, perhaps, such a criminal is not met with once in a hundred years ; while, on the contrary, being in search of a tender-hearted, generous, sentimental, high-minded, hero of romance, you turned to the pages of the ‘Newgate Calendar,’ and looked for him in the list of men who have cut throats for money, among whom a person in possession of such qualities could never have been met with at all. Wanting a shrewd, selfish, worldly, calculating valet, you describe him as an old soldier, though he bears not a single trait of the character which might have been moulded by a long course of military service, but, on the contrary, is marked by all the distinguishing features of a bankrupt attorney, or a lame duck from the Stock Exchange. Having to paint a cat, you endow her with the idiosyncrasies of a dog.”

At the end, the author intimates that he is ready to treat with any liberal publisher for a series of works in the same style, to be called “Tales of the Old Bailey, or Romances of Tyburn Tree.” The proposed series is represented only by “Catherine,” a longer and more elaborate effort in the same direction. It is the narrative of the misdeeds of Mrs. Catherine Hayes,—an allusion to whose criminality in after days brought down upon the author of “Pendennis” an amusing outpouring of fury from Irish patriotism, forgetting in its excitement that the name was borne by a heroine of the “Newgate Calendar” as well as by the accomplished singer whom we all regret. The purpose of

"Catherine" is the same as that of "Elizabeth Brownrigge"—to explode the *lusus naturæ* school; but the plan adopted is slightly different. Things had got worse than they were in 1832. The public had called for coarse stimulants and had got them. "Jack Sheppard" had been acquiring great popularity in "Bentley's Miscellany;" and the true feeling and pathos of many parts of "Oliver Twist" had been marred by the unnatural sentimentalism of Nancy. Mr. Ikey Solomon objected utterly to these monstrosities of literature, and thought the only cure was a touch of realism; an attempt to represent blackguards in some measure as they actually are:—

"In this," he says, "we have consulted nature and history rather than the prevailing taste and the general manner of authors. The amusing novel of 'Ernest Maltravers,' for instance, opens with a seduction; but then it is performed by people of the strictest virtue on both sides; and there is so much religion and philosophy in the heart of the seducer, so much tender innocence in the soul of the seduced, that—bless the little dears!—their very peccadilloes make one interested in them; and their naughtiness becomes quite sacred, so deliciously is it described. Now, if we are to be interested by rascally actions, let us have them with plain faces, and let them be performed, not by virtuous philosophers, but by rascals. Another clever class of novelists adopt the contrary system, and create interest by making their rascals perform virtuous actions. Against these popular plans we here solemnly appeal. We say, let your rogues in novels act like rogues, and your honest men like honest men; don't let us have any juggling and thimble-rigging with virtue and vice, so that, at the end of three volumes, the bewildered reader shall not know which is which; don't let us find ourselves kindling at the generous qualities of thieves and sympathising with the rascalities of noble hearts. For our own part, we know what the public likes, and have chosen rogues for our characters, and have taken a story from the 'Newgate Calendar,' which we hope

to follow out to edification. Among the rogues at least, we will have nothing that shall be mistaken for virtue. And if the British public (after calling for three or four editions) shall give up, not only our rascals, but the rascals of all other authors,—we shall be content. We shall apply to Government for a pension, and think that our duty is done.”

Again, further on in the same story :—

“The public will hear of nothing but rogues ; and the only way in which poor authors, who must live, can act honestly by the public and themselves, is to paint such thieves as they are ; not dandy, poetical, rose-water thieves, but real downright scoundrels, leading scoundrelly lives, drunken, profligate, dissolute, low, as scoundrels will be. They don’t quote Plato like Eugene Aram, or live like gentlemen, and sing the pleasantest ballads in the world, like jolly Dick Turpin ; or prate eternally about τὸ καλόν, like that precious canting Maltravers, whom we all of us have read about and pitied ; or die white-washed saints, like poor Biss Dadsy, in ‘Oliver Twist.’ No, my dear madam, you and your daughters have no right to admire and sympathise with any such persons, fictitious or real : you ought to be made cordially to detest, scorn, loathe, abhor, and abominate all people of this kidney. Men of genius, like those whose works we have above alluded to, have no business to make these characters interesting or agreeable, to be feeding your morbid fancies, or indulging their own with such monstrous food. For our parts, young ladies, we beg you to bottle up your tears, and not waste a single drop of them on any one of the heroes or heroines in this history ; they are all rascals every soul of them, and behave ‘as sich.’ Keep your sympathy for those who deserve it ; don’t carry it, for preference, to the Old Bailey, and grow maudlin over the company assembled there.”

Neither of these tales, though it is very curious to look back at them now, can be considered quite successful. And the reason of this is not hard to find. It was impossible that they could be attractive as stories ; while, on the other hand, the humour was not

broad enough to command attention for itself. They were neither sufficiently interesting, nor sufficiently amusing. They are caricatures without the element of caricature. In "Elizabeth," we have little but the story of a crime committed by a criminal actuated by motives and overflowing with sentiments of the Eugene Aram type. "Catherine" is more ambitious. In it an attempt is made to construct a story—to delineate character. The rival loves of Mr. Bullock and Mr. Hayes, and the adventures of the latter on his marriage-day, show to some extent the future novelist; while in the pictures of the manners of the times, slight though they are, in the characters of Corporal Brock and Cornet Galgenstein, and M. l'Abbé O'Flaherty, we can trace—or at least we now fancy we can trace—the author of "Barry Lyndon" and "Henry Esmond." Catherine herself, in her gradual progress from the village jilt to a murderess, is the most striking thing in the story, and is a sketch of remarkable power. But nothing could make a story interesting which consists of little more than the seduction of a girl, the intrigues of a mistress, the discontent of a wife growing into hatred and ending in murder. At the close, indeed, the writer resorts to the true way of making such a *jeu d'esprit* attractive—burlesque. He concludes, though too late altogether to save the piece, in a blaze of theatrical blue-fire; and it was this idea of burlesque or extravagant caricature which led to the perfected successes of George de Barnwell and Codlingsby. In a literary point of view, it is well worth while to go back upon those early efforts; and we have dwelt upon them the more willingly, that their purpose and the literary doctrine they contend for would be well remembered at this very time. We have given up writing about discovered criminals, only to write more about criminals not yet found out; the

lusus naturæ school has given place to the sensational ; the literature of the "Newgate Calendar" has been supplanted by the literature of the detective officer—a style rather the worse and decidedly the more stupid of the two. The re-publication of "Catherine" might be a useful, and would be a not unpleasing specific in the present diseased state of literary taste. We have said that the hand of the master is traceable in the characters of this tale. We have also a good example of what was always a marked peculiarity, both in his narrative writing, and in his representations of composite natures, what some one has called his "sudden pathos," an effect of natural and unexpected contrast always deeply poetical in feeling, such as the love of Barry Lyndon for his son, the association of a murderess eyeing her victim, with images of beauty and happiness and peace. We quote the passage, although, as is always the case with the best things of the best writers, it suffers greatly by separation from the context, the force of the contrast being almost entirely lost :—

"Mrs. Hayes sat up in the bed sternly regarding her husband. There is, be sure, a strong magnetic influence in wakeful eyes so examining a sleeping person ; do not you, as a boy, remember waking of bright summer mornings and finding your mother looking over you ? had not the gaze of her tender eyes stolen into your senses long before you woke, and cast over your slumbering spirit a sweet spell of peace, and love, and fresh-springing joy ?"

In 1840, the "Shabby Genteel Story" appeared in "Fraser," which broke off sorrowfully enough, as we are told, "at a sad period of the writer's own life," to be afterwards taken up in "The Adventures of Philip." The story is not a pleasant one, nor can we read it without pain, although we know that the after fortunes of the Little Sister are not altogether unhappy. But

it shows clear indications of growing power and range ; Brandon, Tufthunt, the Gann family, and Lord Cinqbars, can fairly claim the dignity of ancestors. The "Great Hoggarty Diamond" came in 1841. This tale was always, we are informed in the preface to a separate edition in 1849, a great favourite with the author—a judgment, however, in which at first he stood almost alone. It was refused by one magazine before it found a place in "Fraser ;" and when it did appear it was little esteemed, or, indeed, noticed in any way. The late Mr. John Sterling took a different view, and wrote Mr. Thackeray a letter which "at that time gave me great comfort and pleasure." Few will now venture to express doubts of Mr. Sterling's discernment. But in reality we suspect that this story is not very popular. It is said to want humour and power ; but, on the other hand, in its beauty of pathos and tenderness of feeling, quite indescribable, it reaches a higher point of art than any of the minor tales ; and these qualities have gained for it admirers very enthusiastic if not numerous. "Fraser" for June of the same year has a most enjoyable paper called "Memorials of Gormandizing," in which occurs the well-known adaptation of the "Persicos Odi"—"Dear Lucy, you know what my wish is ;" a paper better than anything in the "Original," better because simpler than Hayward's "Art of Dining," and which should certainly be restored to a dinner-eating world. To say nothing of its quiet humour and comical earnestness, it has a real practical value. It would be invaluable to all the hungry Britons in Paris who lower our national character, and, what is a far greater calamity, demoralise even French cooks, by their well-meant but ignorant endeavours to dine. There is a description of a dinner at the Café Foy altogether inimitable ; so graphic that the reader almost fancies

himself in the actual enjoyment of the felicity depicted. Several of the Fitz-Boodle papers, which appeared in 1842-43, are omitted in the Miscellanies. But in spite of the judgment of the author himself we venture to think that Mr. Fitz-Boodle's love experiences as recorded in "Miss Löwe" (October 1842), "Dorothea" (January 1843), and "Ottilia" (February 1843), are not unworthy of a place beside the "Ravenswing," and should be preserved as a warning to all fervent young men. And during these hard-working years we have also a paper on "Dickens in France," containing an amazing description of Nicholas Nickleby as translated and adapted (bless thee, Bottom, thou art translated indeed!) to the Parisian stage, followed by a hearty defence of Boz against the criticism of Jules Janin; and "Bluebeard's Ghost," in its idea—that of carrying on a well-known story beyond its proper end—the forerunner of Rebecca and Rowena. "Little Travels" is the title of two papers, in May and October 1844,—sketches from Belgium, closely resembling, certainly not inferior to the round-about paper called a "Week's Holiday;" and our enumeration of his contributions to "Fraser" closes with the incomparable "Barry Lyndon." "The Hoggarty Diamond" is better and purer, and must therefore rank higher; but "Barry Lyndon" in its own line stands, we think, unrivalled; immeasurably superior, if we must have comparative criticism, to "Count Fathom;" superior even to the history of "Jonathan Wild." It seems to us to equal the sarcasm and remorseless irony of Fielding's masterpiece, with a wider range and a more lively interest.

Mr. Thackeray's connection with "Punch" began very early in the history of that periodical, and he continued a constant contributor at least up to 1850. The acquisition was an invaluable one to "Mr. Punch."

Without undue disparagement of that august dignitary it may now be said that at first he was too exclusively metropolitan in his tone, too much devoted to "natural histories" of medical students and London idlers—in fact somewhat Cockney. Mr. Thackeray at once stamped it with a different tone; made its satire universal, adapted its fun to the appreciation of cultivated men. On the other hand, the connection with "Punch" must have been of the utmost value to Mr. Thackeray. He had the widest range, could write without restraint, and without the finish and completeness necessary in more formal publications. The unrestrained practice in "Punch," besides the improvement in style and in modes of thought which practice always gives, probably had no small share in teaching him wherein his real strength lay. For it is worthy of notice in Mr. Thackeray's literary career that this knowledge did not come easily or soon, but only after hard work and much experience. His early writings both in "Fraser" and "Punch" were as if groping. In these periodicals his happier efforts come last, and after many preludes—some of them broken off abruptly. "Catherine" is lost in "George de Barnwell;" "Yellowplush" and "Fitz-Boodle" are the preambles to "Barry Lyndon" and "The Hoggarty Diamond;" "Punch's Continental Tour" and the "Wanderings of the Fat Contributor" close untimely, and are succeeded by the "Snob Papers" and the kindly wisdom of the elder Brown. Fame, indeed, was not now far off; but ere it could be reached there remained yet repeated effort and frequent disappointment. With peculiar pleasure we now recall the fact that these weary days of struggle and comparative obscurity were cheered in no inconsiderable degree by the citizens of Edinburgh.

There happened to be placed in the window of an

Edinburgh jeweller a silver statuette of "Mr. Punch," with his dress *en rigueur*,—his comfortable and tidy paunch, with all its buttons; his hunch; his knee-breeches, with their ties; his compact little legs, one foot a little forward; and the intrepid and honest, kindly little fellow firmly set on his pins, with his customary look of up to and good for anything. In his hand was his weapon, a pen; his skull was an inkhorn, and his cap its lid. A passer-by—who had long been grateful to our author, as to a dear unknown and enriching friend, for his writings in "Fraser" and in "Punch," and had longed for some way of reaching him, and telling him how his work was relished and valued—bethought himself of sending this inkstand to Mr. Thackeray. He went in, and asked its price. "Ten guineas, sir." He said to himself, "There are many who feel as I do; why shouldn't we send him up to him? I'll get eighty several half-crowns, and that will do it;" (he had ascertained that there would be discount for ready money). With the help of a friend, who says he awoke to Thackeray, and divined his great future, when he came, one evening, in "Fraser" for May 1844, on the word "*kinopium*,"¹

¹ Here is the passage. It is from "Little Travels and Roadside Sketches." Why are they not republished? We must have his "Opera Omnia." He is on the top of the Richmond omnibus. "If I were a great prince, and rode outside of coaches (as I should if I were a great prince), I would, whether I smoked or not, have a case of the best Havannahs in my pocket, not for my own smoking, but to give them to the snobs on the coach, who smoke the vilest cheroots. They poison the air with the odour of their filthy weeds. A man at all easy in circumstances would spare himself much annoyance by taking the above simple precaution.

"A gentleman sitting behind me tapped me on the back, and asked for a light. He was a footman or rather valet. He had no livery, but the three friends who accompanied him were tall men in pepper-and-salt undress jackets, with a duke's coronet on their buttons.

"After tapping me on the back, and when he had finished his cheroot, the gentleman produced another wind instrument, which he called a 'kinopium,' a sort of trumpet, on which he showed a great inclination to

the half-crowns were soon forthcoming, and it is pleasant to remember, that in the "octogint" are the names of Lord Jeffrey and Sir William Hamilton, who gave their half-crowns with the heartiest good-will. A short note was written telling the story. The little man in silver was duly packed, and sent with the following inscription round the base :—

GULIELMO MAKEPEACE THACKERAY.

ARMA VIRUMQUE

GRATI NECNON GRATÆ EDINENSES

LXXX.

D. D. D.

To this the following reply was made :—

" 13 YOUNG STREET, KENSINGTON SQUARE,
May 11, 1848.

" MY DEAR SIR,—The arms and the man arrived in safety yesterday, and I am glad to know the names of two of the eighty Edinburgh friends who have taken such a kind method of showing their good-will towards me. If you are grati I am grator. Such tokens of regard & sympathy are very precious to a writer like myself, who have some difficulty still in making people understand what you have been good enough to find out in Edinburgh that under the mask satirical there walks about a sentimental gentleman who means not unkindly to any mortal person. I can see exactly the same expression under the vizard of my little friend in silver, and hope some day to shake the whole octogint by the hand gratos & gratas, and thank them for their friendliness and regard. I think I had best say no more on the subject lest I should be tempted into some enthusiastic writing of wh I am afraid. I assure you these tokens of what I can't help acknowledging as popularity—play. He began puffing out of the kinopium an abominable air, which he said was the 'Duke's March.' It was played by the particular request of the pepper-and-salt gentry.

"The noise was so abominable, that even the coachman objected, and said it was not allowed to play on *his* bus. 'Very well,' said the valet, '*we're only of the Duke of E——'s establishment, THAT'S ALL.*' "

make me humble as well as grateful—and make me feel an almost awful sense of the responsibility w^h falls upon a man in such a station. Is it deserved or undeserved? Who is this that sets up to preach to mankind, and to laugh at many things w^h men reverence? I hope I may be able to tell the truth always, & to see it aright, according to the eyes w^h God Almighty gives me. And if, in the exercise of my calling I get friends, and find encouragement and sympathy, I need not tell you how much I feel and am thankful for this support.—Indeed I can't reply lightly upon this subject or feel otherwise than very grave when people begin to praise me as you do. Wishing you and my Edinburgh friends all health and happiness believe me my dear Sir most faithfully yours

W. M. THACKERAY."

How like the man is this gentle and serious letter, written these long years ago! He tells us frankly his "calling:" he is a preacher to mankind. He "laughs," he does not sneer. He asks home questions at himself as well as the world: "Who is this?" Then his feeling "not otherwise than very grave" when people begin to praise, is true Conscientiousness. This servant of his Master hoped to be able "to tell the truth always, and to see it aright, according to the eyes which God Almighty gives me." His picture by himself will be received as correct *now*, "a sentimental gentleman, meaning not unkindly to any mortal person"—sentimental in its good old sense, and a gentleman in heart and speech. And that little touch about enthusiastic writing, proving all the more that the enthusiasm itself was there.

Of his work in "Punch," the "Ballads of Pleace-man X," the "Snob Papers," "Jeames' Diary," the "Travels and Sketches in London," a "Little Dinner at Timmins'," are now familiar to most readers. But besides these he wrote much which has found no place in the "Miscellanies." M. de la Pluche discoursed touching many matters other than his own rise and

fall. "Our Fat Contributor" wandered over the face of the earth gaining and imparting much wisdom and experience, if little information; Dr. Solomon Pacifico "prosed" on various things besides the "pleasures of being a Foggy;" and even two of the "Novels by Eminent Hands," "Crinoline" and "Stars and Stripes," have been left to forgetfulness. "Mrs. Tickletoby's Lectures on the History of England" in vol. iii. are especially good reading. Had they been completed, they would have formed a valuable contribution to the philosophy of history. His contributions to "Punch" became less frequent about 1850, but the connection was not entirely broken off till much later; we remember, in 1854, the "Letters from the Seat of War, by our own Bashi-Bazouk," who was, in fact, Major Gahagan again, always foremost in his country's cause. To the last, as "Mr. Punch" has himself informed us, he continued to be an adviser and warm friend, and was a constant guest at the weekly *symposia*.

In addition to all this work for periodicals, Mr. Thackeray had ventured on various independent publications. We have already alluded to "Flore et Zephyr," his first attempt. In 1840, he again tried fortune with "The Paris Sketch-Book," which is at least remarkable for a dedication possessing the quite peculiar merit of expressing real feeling. It is addressed to M. Aretz, Tailor, 27 Rue Richelieu, Paris; and we quote it the more readily that, owing to the failure of these volumes to attract public attention, the rare virtues of that gentleman have been less widely celebrated than they deserve:—

"SIR,—It becomes every man in his station to acknowledge and praise virtue wheresoever he may find it, and to point it out for the admiration and example of his fellow-men.

"Some months since, when you presented to the writer of

these pages a small account for coats and pantaloons manufactured by you, and when you were met by a statement from your debtor that an immediate settlement of your bill would be extremely inconvenient to him, your reply was, ' Mon dieu, Sir, let not that annoy you ; if you want money, as a gentleman often does in a strange country, I have a thousand-franc note at my house, which is quite at your service.' History or experience, Sir, makes us acquainted with so few actions that can be compared to yours—an offer like this from a stranger and a tailor seems to me so astonishing,—that you must pardon me for making your virtue public, and acquainting the English nation with your merit and your name. Let me add, Sir, that you live on the first floor ; that your cloths and fit are excellent, and your charges moderate and just ; and, as a humble tribute of my admiration, permit me to lay these volumes at your feet.—Your obliged faithful servant,

M. A. TITMARSH."

Some of the papers in these two volumes were reprints, as " Little Poinset " and " Cartouche " from " Fraser " for 1839 ; " Mary Ancel " from " The New Monthly " for 1839 ; others appeared then for the first time. They are, it must be confessed, of unequal merit. " A Caution to Travellers " is a swindling business, afterwards narrated in " Pendennis " by Amory or Altamont as among his own respectable adventures ; " Mary Ancel," and " The Painter's Bargain " are amusing stories ; while a " Gambler's Death " is a tale quite awful in the everyday reality of its horror. There is much forcible criticism on the French school of painting and of novel-writing, and two papers especially good called " Caricatures and Lithography in Paris," and " Meditations at Versailles," the former of which gives a picture of Parisian manners and feeling in the Orleans times in no way calculated to make us desire those days back again ; the latter an expression of the thoughts called up by the splendour of Versailles and the beauty of the Petit

Trianon, in its truth, sarcasm, and half-melancholy, worthy of his best days. All these the public, we think, would gladly welcome in a more accessible form. Of the rest of the "Sketch-Book" the same can hardly be said, and yet we should ourselves much regret never to have seen, for example, the four graceful imitations of Béranger.

The appreciative and acquisitive tendencies of our Yankee friends forced, we are told, independent authorship on Lord Macaulay and Sir James Stephen. We owe to the same cause the publication of the "Comic Tales and Sketches" in 1841; Mr. Yellowplush's memoirs having been more than once reprinted in America before that date. The memoirs were accompanied with "The Fatal Boots" (from the "Comic Almanack"); the "Bedford Row Conspiracy," and the Reminiscences of that astonishing Major Gahagan (both from the "New Monthly Magazine," 1838-40, a periodical then in great glory, with Hood, Marryat, Jerrold, and Laman Blanchard among its contributors); all now so known and so appreciated that the failure of this third effort seems altogether unaccountable. In 1843, however, the "Irish Sketch-Book" was, we believe, tolerably successful; and in 1846 the "Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo" was still more so; in which year also "Vanity Fair" began the career which has given him his place and name in English literature.

We have gone into these details concerning Mr. Thackeray's early literary life, not only because they seem to us interesting and instructive in themselves; not only because we think his severe judgment rejecting so many of his former efforts should in several instances be reversed; but because they gave us much aid in arriving at a true estimate of his genius. He began literature as a profession early in life—about

the age of twenty-five—but even then he was, as he says of Addison, “full and ripe.” Yet it was long before he attained the measure of his strength, or discovered the true bent of his powers. His was no sudden leap into fame. On the contrary, it was by slow degrees, and after many and vain endeavours, that he attained to anything like success. Were it only to show how hard these endeavours were, the above retrospect would be well worth while; not that the retrospect is anything like exhaustive. In addition to all we have mentioned, he wrote for the “Westminster,” for the “Examiner,” and the “Times;” was connected with the “Constitutional,” and also, it is said, with the “Torch” and the “Parthenon”—these last three being papers which enjoyed a brief existence. No man ever more decidedly refuted the silly notion which disassociates genius from labour. His industry must have been unremitting, for he worked slowly, rarely retouching, writing always with great thought and habitual correctness of expression. His writing would of itself show this; always neat and plain; capable of great beauty and minuteness. He used to say that if all trades failed, he would earn sixpences by writing the Lord’s Prayer and the Creed (not the Athanasian) in the size of one. He considered and practised caligraphy as one of the fine arts, as did Porson and Dr. Thomas Young. He was continually catching new ideas from passing things, and seems frequently to have carried his work in his pocket, and when a thought, or a turn, or a word struck him, it was at once recorded. In the fulness of his experience, he was well pleased when he wrote six pages of “Esmond” in a day; and he always worked in the day, not at night. He never threw away his ideas; if at any time they passed unheeded, or were carelessly expressed, he repeats them, or works them up more

tellingly. In these earlier writings we often stumble upon the germ of an idea, or a story, or a character with which his greater works have made us already familiar ; thus the swindling scenes during the sad days of Becky's decline and fall, and the Baden sketches in the "Newcomes," the Deuceaces, and Punters, and Lodgers, are all in the "Yellowplush Papers" and the "Paris Sketch-Book ;" the University pictures of "Pendennis" are sketched, though slightly, in the "Shabby-Genteel Story ;" the anecdote of the child whose admirer of seven will learn that she has left town "from the newspapers," is transferred from the "Book of Snobs" to Ethel Newcome ; another child in a different rank of life, whose acquisition of a penny gains for her half-a-dozen sudden followers and friends, appears, we think, three times ; "Canute," neglected in "Punch," is incorporated in "Rebecca and Rowena." And his names, on which he bestowed no ordinary care, and which have a felicity almost deserving an article to themselves, are repeated again and again. He had been ten years engaged in literary work before the conception of "Vanity Fair" grew up. Fortunately for him it was declined by at least one magazine, and, as we can well believe, not without much anxiety and many misgivings he sent it out to the world alone. Its progress was at first slow ; but we cannot think its success was ever doubtful. A friendly notice in the "Edinburgh," when eleven numbers had appeared, did something, the book itself did the rest ; and before "Vanity Fair" was completed, the reputation of its author was established.

Mr. Thackeray's later literary life is familiar to all. It certainly was not a life of idleness. "Vanity Fair," "Pendennis," "Esmond," "The Newcomes," "The Virginians," "Philip ;" the Lectures on the "Humor-

ists" and the "Georges;" and that wonderful series of Christmas stories, "Mrs. Perkins' Ball," "Our Street," "Dr. Birch," "Rebecca and Rowena," and "The Rose and the Ring," represent no small labour on the part of the writer, no small pleasure and improvement on the part of multitudes of readers. For the sake of the "Cornhill Magazine" he reverted to the editorial avocations of his former days, happily with a very different result both on the fortunes of the periodical and his own, but, we should think, with nearly as much discomfort to himself. The public, however, were the gainers, if only they owe to this editorship the possession of "Lovel the Widower." We believe that Lovel was written for the stage, and was refused by the management of the Olympic about the year 1854. Doubtless the decision was wise, and Lovel might have failed as a comedy. But as a tale it is quite unique—full of humour, and curious experience of life, and insight; with a condensed vigour, and grotesque effects and situations which betray its dramatic origin. The tone of many parts of the book, particularly the description of the emotions of a disappointed lover, shows the full maturity of the author's powers; but there is a daring and freshness about other parts of it which would lead us to refer the dramatic sketch even to an earlier date than 1854. This imperfect sketch of his literary labours may be closed, not inappropriately, with the description which his "faithful old Gold Pen" gives us of the various tasks he set it to :—

"Since he my faithful service did engage
To follow him through his queer pilgrimage,
I've drawn and written many a line and page.

Caricatures I scribbled have, and rhymes,
And dinner-cards, and picture pantomimes,
And merry little children's books at times.

I've writ the foolish fancy of his brain ;
 The aimless jest that, striking, hath caused pain ;
 The idle word that he'd wish back again.

I've help'd him to pen many a line for bread ;
 To joke, with sorrow aching in his head ;
 And make your laughter when his own heart bled.

Feasts that were ate a thousand days ago,
 Biddings to wine that long hath ceased to flow,
 Gay meetings with good fellows long laid low ;

Summons to bridal, banquet, burial, ball,
 Tradesman's polite reminders of his small
 Account due Christmas last—I've answered all.

Poor Diddler's tenth petition for a half-
 Guinea ; Miss Bunyan's for an autograph ;
 So I refuse, accept, lament, or laugh,

Condole, congratulate, invite, praise, scoff,
 Day after day still dipping in my trough,
 And scribbling pages after pages off.

Nor pass the words as idle phrases by ;
 Stranger ! I never writ a flattery,
 Nor sign'd the page that register'd a lie."

" En réalité," says the writer of an interesting notice in " Le Temps," " l'auteur de ' Vanity Fair ' (la ' Foire aux vanités ') est un satiriste, un moraliste, un humoriste, auquel il a manqué, pour être tout-à-fait grand, d'être un artiste. Je dis tout-à-fait grand ; car s'il est douteux que, comme humoriste, on le puisse comparer soit à Lamb, soit à Sterne, il est bien certain, du moins, que comme satiriste, il ne connaît pas de supérieurs, pas même Dryden, pas même Swift, pas même Pope. Et ce qui le distingue d'eux, ce qui l'élève au dessus d'eux, ce qui fait de lui un génie essentiellement original, c'est que sa colère pour qui est capable d'en pénétrer le secret, n'est au fond que la réaction d'une nature tendre, furieuse d'avoir été désappointée."

Beyond doubt the French critic is right in holding Thackeray's special powers to have been those of a satirist or humorist. We shall form but a very inadequate conception of his genius if we look at him exclusively, or even chiefly, as a novelist. His gifts were not those of a teller of stories. He made up a story in which his characters played their various parts, because the requirement of interest is at the present day imperative, and because stories are well paid for, and also because to do this was to a certain extent an amusement to himself; but it was often, we suspect, a great worry and puzzle to him, and never resulted in any marked success. It is not so much that he is a bad constructor of a plot, as that his stories have no plot at all. We say nothing of such masterpieces of constructive art as *Tom Jones*; he is far from reaching even the careless power of the stories of Scott. None of his novels end with the orthodox marriage of hero and heroine, except "*Pendennis*," which might just as well have ended without it. The stereotyped matrimonial wind-up in novels can of course very easily be made game of; but it has a rational meaning. When a man gets a wife and a certain number of hundreds a year, he grows stout, and his adventures are over. Hence novelists naturally take this as the crisis in a man's life to which all that has gone before leads up. But for Mr. Thackeray's purposes a man or a woman is as good after marriage as before it—indeed rather better. To some extent this is intentional; a character, as he says somewhere, is too valuable a property to be easily parted with. Besides, he is not quite persuaded that marriage concludes all that is interesting in the life of a man: "As the hero and heroine pass the matrimonial barrier, the novelist generally drops the curtain, as if the drama were over then, the doubts and struggles of life ended; as if, once landed in the

marriage country, all were green and pleasant there, and wife and husband had nothing but to link each other's arms together, and wander gently downwards towards old age in happy and perfect fruition." But he demurs to this view ; and as he did not look on a man's early life as merely an introduction to matrimony, so neither did he regard that event as a final conclusion. Rejecting then this natural and ordinary catastrophe, he makes no effort to provide another. His stories stop, but they don't come to an end. There seems no reason why they should not go on further, or why they should not have ceased before. Nor does this want of finish result from weariness on the part of the writer, or from that fear of weariness on the part of readers which Mr. Jedediah Cleishbotham expresses to Miss Martha Buskbody :—" Really, madam, you must be aware that every volume of a narrative turns less and less interesting as the author draws to a conclusion ; just like your tea, which though excellent hyson, is necessarily weaker and more insipid in the last cup. Now, as I think the one is by no means improved by the luscious lump of half-dissolved sugar usually found at the bottom of it, so I am of opinion that a history, growing already vapid, is but dully crutched up by a detail of circumstances which every reader must have anticipated, even though the author exhaust on them every flowery epithet in the language." It arises from the want of a plot, from the want often of any hero or heroine round whom a plot can centre. Most novelists know how to let the life out towards the end, so that the story dies quite naturally, having been wound up for so long. But his airy nothings, if once life is breathed into them, and they are made to speak and act, and love and hate, will not die ; on the contrary, they grow in force and vitality under our very eye ; the curtain comes sheer down upon

them when they are at their best. Hence his trick of re-introducing his characters in subsequent works, as fresh and life-like as ever. He does not indeed carry this so far as Dumas, whose characters are traced with edifying minuteness of detail from boyhood to the grave; Balzac or our own Trollope afford, perhaps, a closer comparison, although neither of these writers—certainly not Mr. Trollope—rivals Thackeray in the skill with which such re-appearances are managed. In the way of delineation of character we know of few things more striking in its consistency and truth than *Beatrice Esmond* grown into the *Baroness Bernstein*: the attempt was hazardous, the success complete.

Yet this deficiency in constructive art was not inconsistent with dramatic power of the highest order. Curiously enough, if his stories for the most part end abruptly, they also for the most part open well. Of some of them, as "*Pendennis*" and the "*Newcomes*," the beginnings are peculiarly felicitous. But his dramatic power is mainly displayed in his invention and representation of character. In invention his range is perhaps limited, though less so than is commonly said. He has not, of course, the sweep of Scott, and even where a comparison is fairly open, he does not show Scott's creative faculty; thus, good as his high life below stairs may be, he has given us no *Jenny Dennison*. He does not attempt artisan life like George Eliot, nor, like other writers of the day, affect rural simplicity, or delineate provincial peculiarities (the *Mulligan* and *Costigan* are national), or represent special views or opinions. But he does none of these things,—not so much because his range is limited, as because his art is universal. There are many phases of human life on which he has not touched; few developments of human nature. He has caught those traits which are common to all man-

kind—peer and artisan alike, and he may safely omit minor points of distinction. It is a higher art to draw men, than to draw noblemen or working men. If the specimen of our nature be brought before us, it matters little whether it be dressed in a lace coat or a fustian jacket. Among novelists he stands, in this particular, hardly second to Scott. His pages are filled with those touches of nature which make the whole world kin. Almost every passion and emotion of the heart of man finds a place in his pictures. These pictures are taken mainly from the upper and middle classes of society, with an occasional excursion into Bohemia, sometimes even into depths beyond that pleasant land of lawlessness. In variety, truth, and consistency, they are unrivalled. They are not caricatures, they are not men of humours; they are the men and women whom we daily meet; they are, in the fullest sense of the word, representative; and yet they are drawn so sharply and finely that we never could mistake or confound them. Pendennis, Clive Newcome, Philip, are all placed in circumstances very much alike, and yet they are discriminated throughout by delicate and certain touches, which we hardly perceive even while we feel their effect. Only one English writer of fiction can be compared to Mr. Thackeray in this power of distinguishing ordinary characters—the authoress of “*Pride and Prejudice*.” But with this power he combines, in a very singular manner, the power of seizing humours, or peculiarities, when it so pleases him. Jos Sedley, Charles Honeyman, Fred Bayham, Major Pendennis, are so marked as to be fairly classed as men of humours; and in what a masterly way the nature in each is caught and held firm throughout! In national peculiarities he is especially happy. The Irish he knows well: the French, perhaps, still better. How wonderfully clever

is the sketch of "Mary Queen of Scots" and the blustering Gascon, and the rest of her disreputable court at Baden! And what can those who object to Thackeray's women say of that gentle lady Madame de Florac—a sketch of ideal beauty, with her early, never-forgotten sorrow, her pure, holy resignation? To her inimitable son no words can do justice. The French-English of his speech would make the fortune of any ordinary novel. It is as unique, and of a more delicate humour, than the orthography of Jeames. Perhaps more remarkable than even his invention is the fidelity with which the conception of his characters is preserved. This never fails. They seem to act, as it were, of themselves. The author having once projected them, appears to have nothing more to do with them. They act somehow according to their own natures, unprompted by him, and beyond his control. ✓ He tells us this himself in one of those delightful and most characteristic Roundabout Papers, which are far too much and too generally undervalued:—"I have been surprised at the observations made by some of my characters. It seems as if an occult power was moving the pen. The personage does or says something, and I ask, How the dickens did he come to think of that? . . . We spake anon of the inflated style of some writers. What also if there is an *afflated* style; when a writer is like a Pythoness, or her oracle tripod, and mighty words, words which he cannot help, come blowing, and bellowing, and whistling, and moaning through the speaking pipes of his bodily organ?" Take one of his most subtle sketches—though it is but a sketch—Elizabeth, in "Lovel the Widower." The woman has a character, and a strong one; she shows it, and acts up to it; but it is as great a puzzle to us as the character of Hamlet; the author himself does not understand it. This is, of course,

art ; and it is the highest perfection of art ; it is the art of Shakespeare ; and hence it is that Thackeray's novels are interesting irrespective of the plot, or story, or whatever we choose to call it. His characters come often without much purpose : they go often without much reason ; but they are always welcome ; and for the most part we wish them well. Dumas makes up for the want of a plot by wild incident and spasmodic writing ; Thackeray makes us forget a like deficiency by the far higher means of true conceptions, and consistent delineations of human nature. "Esmond," alone of all his more important fictions, is artistically constructed. The marriage indeed of Esmond and Lady Castlewood marks no crisis in their lives ; on the contrary, it might have happened at any time, and makes little change in their relations ; but the work derives completeness from the skill with which the events of the time are connected with the fortunes of the chief actors in the story—the historical plot leading up to the catastrophe of Beatrix, the failure of the conspiracy, and the exile of the conspirators. In "Esmond," too, Thackeray's truth to nature is especially conspicuous. In all his books the dialogue is surprising in its naturalness, in its direct bearing on the subject in hand. Never before, we think, in fiction did characters so uniformly speak exactly like the men and women of real life. In "Esmond"—owing to the distance of the scene—this rare excellence was not easy of attainment, yet it has been attained. Every one not only acts, but speaks in accordance certainly with the ways of the time, but always like a rational human being ; there is no trace of that unnaturalness which offends us even in Scott's historical novels, and which substitutes for intelligible converse long harangues in pompous diction, garnished with strange oaths,—a style of communicating their ideas never

adopted, we may be very sure, by any mortals upon this earth. Add to these artistic excellencies, a tenderness of feeling and a beauty of style which even Thackeray has not elsewhere equalled, and we come to understand why the best critics look on "Esmond" as his masterpiece.

Nor, in speaking of Thackeray as a novelist, should we forget to mention—though but in a word—his command of the element of tragedy. The parting of George Osborne with Amelia ; the stern grief of old Osborne for the loss of his son ; the later life of Beatrix Esmond ; the death of Colonel Newcome, are in their various styles perfect, and remarkable for nothing more than for the good taste which controls and subdues them all.

But, as we said before, to criticise Mr. Thackeray as a novelist, is to criticise what was in him only an accident. He wrote stories, because to do so was the mode ; his stories are natural and naturally sustained, because he could do nothing otherwise than naturally ; but to be a teller of stories was not his vocation. His great object in writing was to express himself—his notions of life, all the complications and variations which can be played by a master on this one everlasting theme. Composite human nature as it is, that sins and suffers, enjoys and does virtuously, that was "the main haunt and region of his song." To estimate him fairly, we must look at him as taking this wider range ; must consider him as a humorist, using the word as he used it himself. "The humorous writer professes to awaken and direct your love, your pity, your kindness ; your scorn for untruth, pretension, imposture ; your tenderness for the weak, the poor, the oppressed, the unhappy. To the best of his means and ability, he comments on all the ordinary actions and passions of life almost. He takes upon himself

to be the week-day preacher, so to speak. Accordingly, as he finds and speaks and feels the truth best, we regard him, esteem him—sometimes love him.” Adopting this point of view, and applying this standard, it seems to us that no one of the great humorists of whom he has spoken is deserving equally with himself of our respect, esteem, and love ;—respect for intellectual power, placing him on a level even with Swift and Pope ; esteem for manliness as thorough as the manliness of Fielding, and rectitude as unsullied as the rectitude of Addison ; love for a nature as kindly as that of Steele. Few will deny the keen insight, the passion for truth of the week-day preacher we have lost ; few will now deny the kindliness of his disposition, but many will contend that the kindliness was too much restrained ; that the passion for truth was allowed to degenerate into a love of detecting hidden faults. The sermons on women have been objected to with especial vehemence and especial want of reason. No one who has read Mr. Brown’s letters to his nephew—next to the Snob Papers and Sydney Smith’s Lectures, the best modern work on moral philosophy—will deny that Mr. Thackeray can at least appreciate good women, and describe them :—

“Sir, I do not mean to tell you that there are no women in the world, vulgar and ill-humoured, rancorous and narrow-minded, mean schemers, son-in-law hunters, slaves of fashion, hypocrites ; but I do respect, admire, and almost worship good women ; and I think there is a very fair number of such to be found in this world, and I have no doubt in every educated Englishman’s circle of society, whether he finds that circle in palaces in Belgravia and May Fair, in snug little suburban villas, in ancient comfortable old Bloomsbury, or in back parlours behind the shop. It has been my fortune to meet with excellent English ladies in every one of these places—wives graceful and affectionate, matrons tender and good, daughters happy and pure-minded, and I

urge the society of such to you, because I defy you to think evil in their company. Walk into the drawing-room of Lady Z., that great lady : look at her charming face, and hear her voice. You know that she can't but be good, with such a face and such a voice. She is one of those fortunate beings on whom it has pleased Heaven to bestow all sorts of its most precious gifts and richest worldly favours. With what grace she receives you ; with what a frank kindness and natural sweetness and dignity ! Her looks, her motions, her words, her thoughts, all seem to be beautiful and harmonious quite. See her with her children, what woman can be more simple and loving ? After you have talked to her for a while, you very likely find that she is ten times as well read as you are : she has a hundred accomplishments which she is not in the least anxious to show off, and makes no more account of them than of her diamonds, or of the splendour round about her—to all of which she is born, and has a happy, admirable claim of nature and possession—admirable and happy for her and for us too ; for is it not a happiness for us to admire her ? Does anybody grudge her excellence to that paragon ? Sir, we may be thankful to be admitted to contemplate such consummate goodness and beauty : and as, in looking at a fine landscape or a fine work of art, every generous heart must be delighted and improved, and ought to feel grateful afterwards, so one may feel charmed and thankful for having the opportunity of knowing an almost perfect woman. Madam, if the gout and the custom of the world permitted, I would kneel down and kiss the hem of your ladyship's robe. To see your gracious face is a comfort—to see you walk to your carriage is a holiday. Drive her faithfully, O thou silver-wigged coachman ! drive to all sorts of splendours and honours and Royal festivals. And for us, let us be glad that we should have the privilege to admire her.

“Now, transport yourself in spirit, my good BOB, into another drawing-room. There sits an old lady of more than fourscore years, serene and kind, and as beautiful in her age now, as in her youth, when History toasted her. What has she not seen, and is she not ready to tell ? All the fame and wit, all the rank and beauty, of more than half a century, have passed through those rooms where you have the honour

of making your best bow. She is as simple now as if she had never had any flattery to dazzle her : she is never tired of being pleased and being kind. Can that have been anything but a good life which after more than eighty years of it are spent, is so calm ? Could she look to the end of it so cheerfully, if its long course had not been pure ? Respect her, I say, for being so happy, now that she is old. We do not know what goodness and charity, what affections, what trials, may have gone to make that charming sweetness of temper, and complete that perfect manner. But if we do not admire and reverence such an old age as that, and get good from contemplating it, what are we to respect and admire ?

“Or shall we walk through the shop (while N. is recommending a tall copy to an amateur, or folding up a two-pennyworth of letter-paper, and bowing to a poor customer in a jacket and apron with just as much respectful gravity as he would show while waiting upon a Duke), and see Mrs. N. playing with the child in the back parlour until N. shall come in to tea ? They drink tea at five o'clock ; and are actually as well-bred as those gentlefolks who dine three hours later. Or will you please to step into Mrs. J.'s lodgings, who is waiting, and at work, until her husband comes home from the Chambers ? She blushes and puts the work away on hearing the knock, but when she sees who the visitor is, she takes it with a smile from behind the sofa cushion, and behold it is one of J.'s waistcoats on which she is sewing buttons. She might have been a Countess blazing in diamonds, had Fate so willed it, and the higher her station the more she would have adorned it. But she looks as charming while plying her needle, as the great lady in the palace whose equal she is,—in beauty, in goodness, in high-bred grace and simplicity : at least, I can't fancy her better, or any Peeress being more than her peer.”

But then he is accused of not having represented this. “It is said,” to quote a friendly critic in the “Edinburgh Review” for 1848, “that having with great skill put together a creature of which the principal elements are indiscriminating affection, ill-

requited devotion, ignorant partiality, a weak will and a narrow intellect, he calls on us to worship his poor idol as the type of female excellence. This is true." Feminine critics enforce similar charges yet more vehemently. Thus, Miss Brontë says,—“As usual, he is unjust to women, quite unjust. There is hardly any punishment he does not deserve for making Lady Castlewood peep through a key-hole, listen at a door, and be jealous of a boy and a milk-maid.” Mrs. Jameson criticises him more elaborately :—“No woman resents his Rebecca—inimitable Becky!—No woman but feels and acknowledges with a shiver the completeness of that wonderful and finished artistic creation; but every woman resents the selfish inane Amelia. . . . Laura in ‘Pendennis’ is a yet more fatal mistake. She is drawn with every generous feeling, every good gift. We do not complain that she loves that poor creature Pendennis, for she loved him in her childhood. She grew up with that love in her heart; it came between her and the perception of his faults; it is a necessity indivisible from her nature. Hallowed, through its constancy, therein alone would lie its best excuse, its beauty and its truth. But Laura, faithless to that first affection; Laura waked up to the appreciation of a far more manly and noble nature, in love with Warrington, and then going back to Pendennis and marrying *him*! Such infirmity might be true of some women, but not of such a woman as Laura; we resent the inconsistency, the indelicacy of the portrait. And then Lady Castlewood,—so evidently a favourite of the author,—what shall we say of her? The virtuous woman, *par excellence*, who ‘never sins and never forgives;’ who never resents, nor relents, nor repents; the mother who is the rival of her daughter; the mother, who for years is the confidante of a man’s delirious

passion for her own child, and then consoles him by marrying him herself! O Mr. Thackeray! this will never do! Such women may exist, but to hold them up as examples of excellence, and fit objects of our best sympathies, is a fault, and proves a low standard in ethics and in art."

But all these criticisms, even if sound, go to this only, that Mr. Thackeray's *representations* of women are unjust: they are confined solely to his novels. Now, if the view we have taken of Mr. Thackeray's genius be the true one, such a limitation is unfair. He is not to be judged only by his novels as a representer of character, he must be judged also by all his writings together as a describer and analyser of character. In the next place, the said criticisms are based upon wonderfully hasty generalisations. Miss Brontë knew that *she* would not have listened at the key-hole, and she jumps at once to the conclusion that neither would Lady Castlewood. But surely the character of that lady is throughout represented as marred by many feminine weaknesses falling little short of unamiability. Is the existence of a woman greedy of affection, jealous, and unforgiving, an impossibility? Her early love for Esmond we cannot quite approve; her later marriage with him we heartily disapprove; but neither of these things is the fault of the writer. With such a woman as Lady Castlewood, deprived of her husband's affection, the growth of an attachment towards her dependant into a warmer feeling, was a matter of extreme probability; and her subsequent marriage to Esmond, affectionate, somewhat weak, and above all, disappointed elsewhere, was, in their respective relations, a mere certainty. Not to have married them would have been a mistake in art. Thus, when a friend remonstrated with him for having made Esmond "marry his mother-in-law,"

he replied, "*I* didn't make him do it ; they did it themselves." But as to Lady Castlewood's being a favourite with the author, and being "held up as an example of excellence, and a fit object of our best sympathies," which is the gravamen of the charge, that is a pure assumption on the part of Mrs. Jameson. We confess to having always received, in reading the book, a clear impression to the contrary. Laura, again, we do not admire vehemently ; but we cannot regard her returning to her first love, after a transient attachment to another, as utterly unnatural. Indeed, we think it the very thing a girl of her somewhat commonplace stamp of character would certainly have done. She never is much in love with Pendennis either first or last, but she marries him nevertheless. She might have loved Warrington had the Fates permitted it, very differently ; and as his wife, would never have displayed those airs of self-satisfaction and moral superiority which make her so tediously disagreeable. But all this fault-finding runs up into the grand objection, that Thackeray's good women are denied brains ; that he preserves an essential alliance between moral worth and stupidity ; and it is curious to see how women themselves dislike this—how, in their admiration of intellect, they admit the truth of Becky willingly enough, but indignantly deny that of Amelia. On this question, Mr. Brown thus expresses himself :—

"A set has been made against clever women from all times. Take all Shakespeare's heroines ; they all seem to me pretty much the same, affectionate, motherly, tender, that sort of thing. Take Scott's ladies, and other writers, each man seems to draw from one model : an exquisite slave is what we want for the most part, a humble, flattering, smiling, child-loving, tea-making, pianoforte-playing being, who laughs at our jokes however old they may be, coaxes and

wheelles us in our humours, and fondly lies to us through life."

In the face of Rosalind, Beatrice, and Portia, it is impossible to concur with Mr. Brown in his notions about Shakspeare's women; but otherwise he is right. Yet it is but a poor defence for the deficiencies of a man of genius, that others have shown the like shortcomings. And on Mr. Thackeray's behalf a much better defence may be pleaded; though it may be one less agreeable to the sex which he is said to have maligned. That defence is a simple plea of not guilty; a denial that his women, as a class, want intellectual power to a greater extent than is consistent with truth. They vary between the extremes of pure goodness and pure intellect—Becky and Amelia—just as women do in real life. The moral element is certainly too prominent in Amelia; but not more so than in Colonel Newcome, and we can't see anything much amiss in Helen Pendennis. Laura, as Miss Bell, is clever enough for any man; and, though she afterwards becomes exceedingly tiresome and a prig, she does not become a fool. And what man would be bold enough to disparage the intellectual powers of Ethel Newcome? Her moral nature is at first incomplete owing to a faulty education; but when this has been perfected through sorrow, wherein is the character deficient? Besides, we must bear in mind that virtue in action is undoubtedly "slow." Goodness is not in itself entertaining, while ability is; and the novelist, therefore, whose aim is to entertain, naturally labours most with the characters possessing the latter, in which characters the reader too is most interested. Hence they acquire greater prominence both as a matter of fact in the story and also in our minds. Becky, Blanche Amory, "Trix are undeniably more interesting, and in their

points of contrast and resemblance afford far richer materials for study than Amelia, Helen Pendennis, and Laura. But this is in the nature of things ; and the writer must not be blamed for it any more than the readers. Taking, however, the Thackerian gallery as a whole, we cannot admit that either in qualities of heart or head, his women are inferior to the women we generally meet. Perhaps he has never—not even in Ethel—combined these qualities in their fullest perfection ; but then how often do we find them so combined ? It seems to us that Thackeray has drawn women more carefully and more truly than any novelist in the language, except Miss Austen ; and it is small reproach to any writer, that he has drawn no female character so evenly good as Anne Elliot or Elizabeth Bennet.

If this is true of his women, we need not labour in defence of his men. For surely it cannot be questioned that his representations of the ruder sex are true, nay, are on the whole an improvement on reality ? The ordinary actors who crowd his scene are not worse than the people we meet with every day ; his heroes, to use a stereotyped expression, are rather better than the average ; while one such character as George Warrington is worth a wilderness of commonplace excellence called into unnatural life. But then it is said his general tone is bitter ; he settles at once on the weak points of humanity, and to lay them bare is his congenial occupation. To a certain extent this was his business. “ Dearly beloved,” he says, “ neither in nor out of this pulpit do I profess to be bigger, or cleverer, or wiser, or better than any of you.” Nevertheless he was a preacher, though an unassuming one ; and therefore it lay upon him to point out faults, to correct rather than to flatter. Yet it must be confessed that his earlier writings are sometimes too bitter in their tone, and too painful in their theme. This

may be ascribed partly to the infectious vehemence of "Fraser" in those days, partly to the influence of such experiences as are drawn upon in some parts of the "Paris Sketch-Book;" but however accounted for, it must be condemned as an error in art. As a disposition to doubt and despond in youth betrays a narrow intellect or a perverted education; so in the beginning of a literary career, a tendency towards gloom and curious research after hidden evil, reveals artistic error, or an unfortunate experience. Both in morals and art these weaknesses are generally the result of years and sorrow; and thus the common transition is from the joyousness of youth to sadness, it may be to moroseness, in old age. But theirs is the higher and truer development, who reverse this process,—who, beginning with false tastes or distorted views, shake these off as they advance into a clearer air, in whom knowledge but strengthens the nobler powers of the soul, and whose kindliness and generosity, based on a firmer foundation than the buoyancy of mere animal life, are purer and more enduring. Such, as it appears to us, was the history of Thackeray's genius. Whatever may have been the severity of his earlier writings, it was latterly laid aside. In the "Newcomes" he follows the critical dogma which lays down, that "fiction has no business to exist unless it be more beautiful than reality;" and truthful kindliness marks all his other writings of a later date, from the letters of Mr. Brown and Mr. Spec in "Punch," down to the pleasant egotism of the "Roundabout Papers." He became disinclined for severe writing even where deserved: "I have militated in former times, and not without glory, but I grow peaceable as I grow old." The only things towards which he never grew peaceable were pretentiousness and falsehood. But he preferred to busy himself with what was innocent and

brave, to attacking even these ; he forgot the satirist, and loved rather honestly to praise or defend. The "Roundabout Papers" show this on every page, especially, perhaps, those on Tunbridge Toys, on Ribbons, on a Joke I heard from the late Thomas Hood, and that entitled *Nil nisi bonum*. The very last paper of all was an angry defence of Lord Clyde against miserable club gossip, unnecessary perhaps, but a thing one likes now to think that Thackeray felt stirred to do. "To be tremblingly alive to gentle impressions," says Foster, "and yet be able to preserve, when occasion requires it, an immovable heart, even amidst the most imperious causes of subduing emotion, is perhaps not an impossible constitution of mind, but it is the utmost and rarest condition of humanity." These words do not describe the nature of a man who would pay out of his own pocket for contributions he could not insert in the "Cornhill ;" but if for heart we substitute intellect, they will perfectly describe his literary genius. He was always tremblingly alive to gentle impressions, but his intellect amidst any emotions remained clear and immovable ; so that good taste was never absent, and false sentiment never came near him. He makes the Sorrows of Werther the favourite reading of the executioner at Strasbourg.¹

Few men have written so much that appeals directly to our emotions, and yet kept so entirely aloof from anything tawdry, from all falsetto. "If my tap," says he, "is not genuine, it is naught, and no man should

¹ Among his ballads we have the following somewhat literal analysis of this work :—

"Werther had a love for Charlotte
Such as words could never utter ;
Would you know how first he met her ?
She was cutting bread and butter.

Charlotte was a married lady,
And a moral man was Werther,
And, for all the wealth of Indies,
Would do nothing for to hurt her.

So he sighed and pined and ogled,
And his passion boiled and bubbled,
Till he blew his silly brains out,
And no more was by it troubled.

Charlotte, having seen his body
Borne before her on a shutter,
Like a well-conducted person,
Went on cutting bread and butter."

give himself the trouble to drink it." It was at all times thoroughly genuine, and is therefore everything to us. Truthfulness, in fact, eager and uncompromising, was his main characteristic ; truthfulness not only in speech, but, what is a far more uncommon and precious virtue, truth in thought. His entire mental machinery acted under this law of truth. He strove always to find and show things as they really are—true nobleness apart from trappings, unaffected simplicity, generosity without ostentation ; confident that so he should best convince every one that what is truly good pleases most, and lasts longest, and that what is otherwise soon becomes tiresome, and, worst of all, ridiculous. A man to whom it has been given consistently to devote to such a purpose the highest powers of sarcasm, ridicule, sincere pathos, and, though sparingly used, of exhortation, must be held to have fulfilled a career singularly honourable and useful. To these noble ends he was never unfaithful. True, he made no boast of this. Disliking cant of all kinds, he made no exception in favour of the cant of his own profession. "What the deuce," he writes to a friend, "our twopenny reputations get us at least twopence-halfpenny ; and then comes *noix fabulæque manes*, and the immortals perish." The straightforward Mr. Yellowplush stoutly maintains, in a similar strain, that people who write books are no whit better, or actuated by more exalted motives, than their neighbours : "Away with this canting about great motifs ! Let us not be too proud, and fancy ourselves martyrs of the truth, martyrs or apostles. We are but tradesmen, working for bread, and not for righteousness' sake. Let's try and work honestly ; but don't let us be praying pompishly about our 'sacred calling.'" And George Warrington, in "Pendennis," is never weary of preaching the same wholesome doctrine.

Thackeray had no sympathy with swagger of any kind. His soul revolted from it; he always talked under what he felt. At the same time, indifference had no part in this want of pretence. So far from being indifferent, he was peculiarly sensitive to the opinions of others; too much so for his own happiness. He hated to be called a cynical satirist; the letter we have quoted to his Edinburgh friends shows how he valued any truer appreciation. Mere slander he could despise like a man; he winced under the false estimates and injurious imputations too frequent from people who should have known better. But he saw his profession as it really was, and spoke of it with his innate simplicity and dislike of humbug. And in this matter, as in the ordinary affairs of life, those who profess little, retaining a decent reserve as to their feelings and motives, are far more to be relied on than those who protest loudly. Whether authors are moved by love of fame, or a necessity for daily bread, does not greatly signify. The world is not concerned with this in the least; it can only require that, as Mr. Yellowplush puts it, they should "try to work honestly;" and herein he never failed. He never wrote but in accordance with his convictions; he spared no pains that his convictions should be in accordance with truth. For one quality we cannot give him too great praise; that is the sense of the distinction of right and of wrong. He never puts bitter for sweet, or sweet for bitter, never calls evil things good, or good things evil; there is no haziness or muddle; no "topsyturvifications," like Madame Sand's, in his moralities:—with an immense and acute compassion for all suffering, with a power of going out of himself, and into almost every human feeling, he vindicates at all times the supremacy of conscience, the sacredness and clearness of the law written in our hearts.

His keenness of observation and his entire truthfulness found expression in a style worthy of them in its sharpness and distinctness. The specimens we have quoted of his earlier writings show that these qualities marked his style from the first. He laboured to improve those natural gifts. He steadily observed Mr. Yellowplush's recommendation touching poetical composition: "Take my advise, honrabble sir—listen to a humble footmin: it's genrally best in poatry to understand puffickly what you mean yourself, and to ingspress your meaning clearly afterwoods—in the simpler words the better, praps." He always expressed his meaning clearly and in simple words. But as, with increasing experience, his meanings deepened and widened, his expression became richer. The language continued to the last simple and direct, but it became more copious, more appropriate, more susceptible of rhythmical combinations: in other words, it rose to be the worthy vehicle of more varied and more poetical ideas. This strange peculiarity of soberness in youth, of fancy coming into being at the command and for the service of the mature judgment, has marked some of the greatest writers. The words in which Lord Macaulay has described it with regard to Bacon may be applied, with little reservation, to Thackeray:—"He observed as vigilantly, meditated as deeply, and judged as temperately, when he gave his first work to the world, as at the close of his long career. But in eloquence, in sweetness and variety of expression, and in richness of illustration, his later writings are far superior to those of his youth." Confessedly at the last he was the greatest master of pure English in our day. His style is never ornate, on the contrary is always marked by a certain reserve which surely betokens thought and real feeling; is never forced or loaded, only entirely appropriate and entirely beautiful.

We quote two passages, both from books written in his prime, not merely as justifying these remarks, but because they illustrate qualities of his mind second only to his truthfulness—his sense of beauty, and his sense of pathos. And yet neither passage has any trace of what he calls the “sin of grandiloquence, or tall-talking.” The first is the end of the “Kickleburys on the Rhine :”—

“The next morning we had passed by the rocks and towers, the old familiar landscapes, the gleaming towers by the river-side, and the green vineyards combed along the hills ; and when I woke up, it was at a great hotel at Cologne, and it was not sunrise yet. Deutz lay opposite, and over Deutz the dusky sky was reddened. The hills were veiled in the mist and the grey. The grey river flowed underneath us ; the steamers were roosting along the quays, a light keeping watch in the cabins here and there, and its reflection quivering in the water. As I look, the sky-line towards the east grows redder and redder. A long troop of grey horsemen winds down the river road, and passes over the bridge of boats. You might take them for ghosts, those grey horsemen, so shadowy do they look ; but you hear the trample of their hoofs as they pass over the planks. Every minute the dawn twinkles up into the twilight ; and over Deutz the heaven blushes brighter. The quays begin to fill with men : the carts begin to creak and rattle : and wake the sleeping echoes. Ding, ding, ding, the steamer’s bells begin to ring : the people on board to stir and wake : the lights may be extinguished, and take their turn of sleep : the active boats shake themselves, and push out into the river : the great bridge opens, and gives them passage : the church-bells of the city begin to clink : the cavalry trumpets blow from the opposite bank : the sailor is at the wheel, the porter at his burthen, the soldier at his musket, and the priest at his prayers. . . . And lo ! in a flash of crimson splendour, with blazing scarlet clouds running before his chariot, and heralding his majestic approach, God’s sun rises upon the world, and all nature wakens and brightens. O glorious spectacle of light and life ! O beatific symbol of

Power, Love, Joy, Beauty! Let us look at thee with humble wonder, and thankfully acknowledge and adore. What gracious forethought is it—what generous and loving provision, that deigns to prepare for our eyes and to soothe our hearts with such a splendid morning festival! For these magnificent bounties of Heaven to us, let us be thankful, even that we can feel thankful (for thanks surely is the noblest effort, as it is the greatest delight, of the gentle soul); and so, a grace for this feast, let all say who partake of it. . . . See! the mist clears off Drachenfels, and it looks out from the distance, and bids us a friendly farewell.”

Our second quotation describes Esmond at his mother's grave—one of the most deeply affecting pieces of writing in the language :—

“ Esmond came to this spot in one sunny evening of spring, and saw, amidst a thousand black crosses, casting their shadows across the grassy mounds, that particular one which marked his mother's resting-place. Many more of those poor creatures that lay there had adopted that same name with which sorrow had re-baptized her, and which fondly seemed to hint their individual story of love and grief. He fancied her, in tears and darkness, kneeling at the foot of her cross, under which her cares were buried. Surely he knelt down, and said his own prayer there, not in sorrow so much as in awe (for even his memory had no recollection of her), and in pity for the pangs which the gentle soul in life had been made to suffer. To this cross she brought them; for this heavenly bridegroom she exchanged the husband who had wooed her, the traitor who had left her. A thousand such hillocks lay round about, the gentle daisies springing out of the grass over them, and each bearing its cross and *requiescat*. A nun, veiled in black, was kneeling hard by, at a sleeping sister's bed-side (so fresh made, that the spring had scarce had time to spin a coverlid for it); beyond the cemetery walls you had glimpses of life and the world, and the spires and gables of the city. A bird came down from a roof opposite, and lit first on a cross, and then on the grass below it, whence it flew away presently with a leaf in its mouth: then came a sound of chanting, from the chapel of

the sisters hard by : others had long since filled the place which poor Mary Magdalene once had there, were kneeling at the same stall and hearing the same hymns and prayers in which her stricken heart had found consolation. Might she sleep in peace—might she sleep in peace ; and we, too when our struggles and pains are over ! But the earth is the Lord's as the heaven is ; we are alike his creatures here and yonder. I took a little flower off the hillock and kissed it, and went my way like the bird that had just lighted on the cross by me, back into the world again. Silent receptacle of death ! tranquil depth of calm, out of reach of tempest and trouble. I felt as one who had been walking below the sea, and treading amidst the bones of shipwrecks."

Looking at Mr. Thackeray's writings as a whole, he would be more truthfully described as a sentimentalist than as a cynic. Even when the necessities of his story compel him to draw bad characters, he gives them as much good as he can. We don't remember in his novels any utterly unredeemed scoundrel except Sir Francis Clavering. Even Lord Steyne has something like genuine sympathy with Major Pendennis's grief at the illness of his nephew. And if reproof is the main burden of his discourse, we must remember that to reprove, not to praise, is the business of the preacher. Still further, if his reproof appears sometimes unduly severe, we must remember that such severity may spring from a belief that better things are possible. Here lies the secret of Thackeray's seeming bitterness. His nature was, in the words of the critic in "*Le Temps*:" "*furieuse d'avoir été désappointée.*" He condemns sternly men as they often are, because he had a high ideal of what they might be. The feeling of this contrast runs through all his writings. "He could not have painted Vanity Fair as he has, unless Eden had been shining brightly before his eyes."¹ And this contrast could never have

¹ Essays by George Brimley. Second Edition. Cambridge, 1860. A collection of singularly good critical papers.

been felt, the glories of Eden could never have been seen by the mere satirist or by the misanthrope. It has been often urged against him that he does not make us think better of our fellow-men. No, truly. But he does what is far greater than this—he makes us think worse of ourselves. There is no great necessity that we should think well of other people ; there is the utmost necessity that we should know ourselves in our every fault and weakness ; and such knowledge his writings will supply.

In Mr. Hannay's Memoir,¹ which we have read with admiration and pleasure, a letter from Thackeray is quoted, very illustrative of this view of his character:—"I hate Juvenal ; I mean I think him a truculent brute, and I love Horace better than you do, and rate Churchill much lower ; and as for Swift, you haven't made me alter my opinion. I admire, or rather admit, his power as much as you do ; but I don't admire that kind of power so much as I did fifteen years ago, or twenty shall we say. *Love is a higher intellectual exercise than hatred.*" We think the terrible Dean had love as well as hate strong within him, and none the worse in that it was more special than general ; "I like Tom, Dick, and Harry," he used to say ; "I hate the race ;" but nothing can be more characteristic of Thackeray than this judgment. Love was the central necessity of his understanding as well as of his affections ; it was his fulfilling of the law ; and unlike the Dean, he could love Tom, and also like and pity as well as rebuke the race.

Mr. Thackeray has not written any history formally so called. But it is known that he purposed doing so, and in "Esmond" and the "Lectures" he has given us much of the real essence of history. The "Satur-

¹ "A Brief Memoir of the late Mr. Thackeray." By James Hannay. Edinburgh, 1864.

day Review," however, in a recent article, has announced that this was a mistake ; that history was not his line. Such a decision is rather startling. In one or two instances of historical representation, Mr. Thackeray may have failed. Johnson and Richardson do not appear in the "Virginians" with much effect. But surely in the great majority of instances, he has been eminently successful. Horace Walpole's letter in the "Virginians," the fictitious "Spectator" in "Esmond" are very felicitous literary imitations. Good-natured trooper Steele comforting the boy in the lonely country-house ; Addison, serene and dignified, "with ever so slight a touch of *merum* in his voice" occasionally ; Bolingbroke, with a good deal of *merum* in his voice, talking reckless Jacobitism at the dinner at General Webbe's, are wonderful portraits. And, though the estimate of Marlborough's character may be disputed, the power with which that character is represented cannot be questioned. But the historical genius displayed in "Esmond" goes beyond this. We know of no history in which the intrigues and confusion of parties at the death of Queen Anne are sketched so firmly as in the third volume of that work ; in fact, a more thorough historical novel was never written. It is not loaded with historical learning ; and yet it is most truly, though or rather *because* unpretendingly, a complete representation of the time. It reads like a veritable memoir. And it will hardly be disputed, that a good historical novel cannot be written save by one possessed of great historical powers. What are the qualities necessary to a historian ? Knowledge, love of truth, insight into human nature, imagination to make alive before him the times of which he writes. All these Mr. Thackeray had. His knowledge was accurate and minute,—indeed, he could not have written save of

what he knew well ; a love of truth was his main characteristic ; for insight into human nature he ranks second to Shakespeare alone ; and while he wanted that highest creative imagination which makes the poet, he had precisely that secondary imagination which serves the historian, which can realise the past and make the distant near. Had he been allowed to carry out his cherished design of recording the reign of Queen Anne, a great gap in the history of our country would have been filled up by one of the most remarkable books in the language. We might have had less than is usual of the "dignity of history," of battles and statutes and treaties ; but we should have had more of human nature—the actors in the drama would have been brought before us living and moving, their passions and hidden motives made clear ; the life of England would have been sketched by a subtle artist ; the literature of England, during a period which this generation often talks about, but of which it knows, we suspect, very little, would have been presented to us lighted up by appreciative and competent criticism. The Saturday Reviewer gives a reason for Mr. Thackeray's failure as a historian, which will seem strange to those who have been accustomed to regard him as a cynic. He was so carried away by worth, says this ingenious critic bent on fault-finding, and so impatient of all moral obliquity, that he could not value fairly the services which had been rendered by bad men. And the instance given is that a sense of what we owe to the Hanoverian succession was not allowed to temper the severity of the estimate given of the first two Georges ;—an unfortunate instance, as the critic would have discovered had he read the following passage in the lecture on George the Second :—

"But for Sir Robert Walpole, we should have had the

Pretender back again. But for his obstinate love of peace, we should have had wars, which the nation was not strong enough nor united enough to endure. But for his resolute counsels and good-humoured resistance, we might have had German despots attempting a Hanoverian regimen over us ; we should have had revolt, commotion, want, and tyrannous misrule, in place of a quarter of a century of peace, freedom, and material prosperity, such as the country never enjoyed, until that corrupter of parliaments, that dissolute, tipsy cynic, that courageous lover of peace and liberty, that great citizen, patriot, and statesman governed it."

The truth is, that Mr. Thackeray, while fully appreciating the blessings of the Hanoverian succession, knew well that the country did not in the least degree owe the stability of that succession to the Hanoverian kings, but, on the contrary, to that great minister, whose character is sketched, in a powerful passage, of which the above quotation is a part. In fact, Mr. Thackeray judged no man harshly. No attentive student of his works can fail to see that he understood the duty of "making allowance," not less with regard to historical characters, than with regard to characters of his own creation. He does full justice, for example, to the courage and conduct of Marlborough, as to whose moral character the opinion of Colonel Esmond is in curious accordance with the historical judgment given later to the public by Lord Macaulay.

These "Lectures on the Georges" were made the ground of a charge against Mr. Thackeray of disloyalty. This charge was urged with peculiar offensiveness by certain journals, which insinuated that the failings of English kings had been selected as a theme grateful to the American audiences who first heard the lectures delivered. Mr. Thackeray felt this charge deeply, and repelled it in language which we think worthy to be

remembered. At a dinner given to him in Edinburgh, in 1857, he said :—

“I had thought that in these lectures I had spoken in terms not of disrespect or unkindness, and in feelings and in language not un-English, of Her Majesty the Queen ; and wherever I have had to mention her name, whether it was upon the banks of the Clyde or upon those of the Mississippi, whether it was in New England or in Old England, whether it was in some great hall in London to the artisans of the suburbs of the metropolis, or to the politer audiences of the western end—wherever I had to mention her name, it was received with shouts of applause, and with the most hearty cheers. And why was this ? It was not on account of the speaker ; it was on account of the truth ; it was because the English and the Americans—the people of New Orleans a year ago, the people of Aberdeen a week ago—all received and acknowledged with due allegiance the great claims to honour which that lady has who worthily holds that great and awful situation which our Queen occupies. It is my loyalty that is called in question, and it is my loyalty that I am trying to plead to you. Suppose, for example, in America—in Philadelphia or in New York—that I had spoken about George IV. in terms of praise and affected reverence, do you believe they would have hailed his name with cheers, or have heard it with anything like respect ? They would have laughed in my face if I had so spoken of him. They know what I know and you know, and what numbers of squeamish loyalists who affect to cry out against my lectures know, that that man’s life was not a good life—that that king was not such a king as we ought to love, or regard, or honour. And I believe, for my part, that in speaking the truth, as we hold it, of a bad sovereign, we are paying no disrespect at all to a good one. Far from it. On the contrary, we degrade our own honour and the Sovereign’s by unduly and unjustly praising him ; and the mere slaverer and flatterer is one who comes forward, as it were, with flash notes, and pays with false coin his tribute to Caesar. I don’t disguise that I feel somehow on my trial here for loyalty, for honest English feeling.”

The judgment pronounced by the accomplished

Scotch judge who presided at this dinner-trial, a man far removed, both by tastes and position, from any sympathy with vulgar popularity-hunting, will be accepted by every candid person as just :—

“I don’t,” said Lord Neaves, “for my part, regret if there are some painful truths told in these lectures to those who had before reposed in the pleasing delusion that everything royal was immaculate. I am not sorry that some of the false trappings of royalty or of a court life should be stripped off. We live under a Sovereign whose conduct, both public and private, is so unexceptionable, that we can afford to look all the facts connected with it in the face ; and woe be to the country or to the crown when the voice of truth shall be stifled as to any such matters, or when the only tongue that is allowed to be heard is that of flattery.”

It was said of Fontenelle that he had as good a heart as could be made out of brains. Adapting the observation, we may say of Thackeray that he was as good a poet as could be made out of brains. The highest gifts of the poet of course he wanted. His imagination, to take Ruskin’s distinction, was more penetrative than associative or contemplative. His mind was too much occupied with realities for persistent ideal work. But manliness and common-sense, combined with a perfect mastery of language, go a long way at least to the making of very excellent verses. More than this, he had the sensibility, the feeling of time and of numbers essential to versifying ; and his mind fulfilled the condition required by our greatest living poet :—

“Clear and bright it should be ever,
Flowing like a crystal river.”

His verse-making was a sort of pleasaunce—a flower-garden in the midst of spacious policies. It was the ornamentation of his intellect. His ballads do not perhaps show poetic feeling more profound than is

possessed by many men; they derive for the most part their charm from the same high qualities as mark his prose, with the attraction of music and rhyme superadded. Writing them seems to have given him real pleasure. The law of self-imposed restraint, of making the thought often wait upon the sound, necessary in rhythmical composition, rather than, as in prose, the sound upon the sense—this measuring of feeling and of expression had plainly a great charm for his rich and docile genius. His verses give one the idea of having been a great delight to himself, like humming a favourite air; there is no trace of effort, and yet the trick of the verse is perfect. His rhymes are often as good as Swift's and Hood's. This feeling of enjoyment, as also the abounding fertility in strange rhymes, is very marked in the *White Squall*; and hardly less in the ease and gaiety of *Peg of Limavaddy*. Take, for instance, the description of the roadside inn where Peg dispenses liquor:—

“Limavaddy inn’s
 But a humble baithouse,
 Where you may procure
 Whiskey and potatoes;
 Landlord at the door
 Gives a smiling welcome—
 To the shivering wights
 Who to his hotel come.
 Landlady within
 Sits and knits a stocking,
 With a wary foot
 Baby’s cradle rocking.
 To the chimney nook,
 Having found admittance,
 There I watch a pup
 Playing with two kittens;
 (Playing round the fire,
 Which of blazing turf is,

Roaring to the pot
 Which bubbles with the murphies)
 And the cradled babe
 Fond the mother nursed it,
 Singing it a song
 As she twists the worsted !”

Peg herself and her laugh—

“ Such a silver peal !
 In the meadows listening,
 You who’ve heard the bells
 Ringing to a christening ;
 You who ever heard
 Caradori pretty,
 Smiling like an angel,
 Singing ‘ Giovinetti ;’
 Fancy Peggy’s laugh,
 Sweet, and clear, and cheerful,
 At my pantaloons
 With half a pint of beer full !
 See her as she moves !
 Scarce the ground she touches,
 Airy as a fay,
 Graceful as a duchess ;
 Bare her rounded arm,
 Bare her little leg is,
 Vestris never show’d
 Ankles like to Peggy’s ;
 Braided is her hair,
 Soft her look and modest,
 Slim her little waist
 Comfortably boddiced.”

In a similar light and graceful style are the Cane-Bottom’d Chair, Piscator and Piscatrix, the Carmen Lillienae, etc. ; and all the *Lyra Hibernica*, especially the rollicking *Battle of Limerick*, are rich in Irish absurdity. That compact little epic the *Chronicle of the Drum*, the well-known *Bouillabaisse*, and *At the Church Gate*—the first literary effort of Mr. Arthur

Pendennis—seem to us in their various styles to rise into the region of real poetry. The Chronicle of the Drum is a grand martial composition, and a picture of the feelings of the French soldiery which strikes on us at once as certainly true. The Ballads of Pleace-man X. are unique in literature—as startlingly original as Tam O'Shanter. Jacob Homnium's Hoss is perhaps the most amusing; the Foundling of Shoreditch the most serious; but through them all there runs a current of good sense, good feeling, and quaint fun which makes them most pleasant reading. They remind one somehow of John Gilpin—indeed there is often the same playful fancy and delicate pensiveness in Thackeray as in Cowper. We should like to quote many of these; but we give in preference Miss Tickle-toby's ballad on King Canute, long though it be, because it is not included in the collected ballads, and has not, we fear, obtained great popularity by being incorporated into "Rebecca and Rowena"—a rendering of poetical justice less generally read than it should be :—

"KING CANUTE.

King Canute was weary-hearted; he had reign'd for years a score;
 Battling, struggling, pushing, fighting, killing much and robbing more,
 And he thought upon his actions, walking by the wild sea-shore.

'Twixt the chancellor and bishop walked the king with steps sedate,
 Chamberlains and grooms came after, silver sticks and gold sticks great,
 Chaplains, aides-de-camp, and pages,—all the officers of state.

Sliding after like his shadow, pausing when he chose to pause;
 If a frown his face contracted, straight the courtiers dropp'd their jaws;
 If to laugh the king was minded, out they burst in loud hee-haws.

But that day a something vex'd him, that was clear to old and young,
 Thrice his grace had yawn'd at table, when his favourite gleeman sung,
 Once the queen would have consoled him, but he bade her hold her
 tongue.

'Something ails my gracious master,' cried the keeper of the seal,
 'Sure, my lord, it is the lampreys served at dinner, or the veal!'
 'Psha!' exclaim'd the angry monarch, 'keeper, 'tis not that I feel.

'Tis the *heart* and not the dinner, fool, that doth my rest impair ;
 Can a king be great as I am, prithee, and yet know no care ?
 Oh, I'm sick, and tired, and weary.'—Some one cried, 'The king's
 arm-chair !'

Then towards the lackeys turning, quick my lord the keeper nodded,
 Straight the king's great chair was brought him, by two footmen
 able-bodied,

Languidly he sank into it : it was comfortably wadded.

'Leading on my fierce companions,' cried he, 'over storm and brine,
 I have fought and I have conquer'd ! Where was glory like to mine !'
 Loudly all the courtiers echoed, 'Where is glory like to thine ?'

'What avail me all my kingdoms ? Weary am I now, and old,
 Those fair sons I have begotten, long to see me dead and cold ;
 Would I were, and quiet buried, underneath the silent mould !'

'O remorse, the writhing serpent ! at my bosom tears and bites :
 Horrid, horrid things I look on, though I put out all the lights ;
 Ghosts of ghastly recollections troop about my bed of nights.

'Cities burning, convents blazing, red with sacrilegious fires ;
 Mothers weeping, virgins screaming, vainly for their slaughter'd sires—'
 —'Such a tender conscience,' cries the bishop, 'every one admires.'

'But for such unpleasant by-gones, cease, my gracious lord, to search,
 They're forgotten and forgiven by our holy Mother Church ;
 Never, never does she leave her benefactors in the lurch.

'Look ! the land is crown'd with minsters, which your Grace's bounty
 raised ;

Abbeys filled with holy men, where you and heaven are daily praised ;
 You, my lord, to think of dying ? on my conscience, I'm amazed !'

'Nay, I feel,' replied King Canute, 'that my end is drawing near ;'
 'Don't say so,' exclaim'd the courtiers (striving each to squeeze a tear),
 'Sure your grace is strong and lusty, and may live this fifty year.'

'Live these fifty years !' the bishop roar'd, with actions made to suit,
 'Are you mad, my good lord keeper, thus to speak of King Canute !
 Men have lived a thousand years, and sure his Majesty will do 't.

'Adam, Enoch, Lamech, Canan, Mahaleel, Methusela,
 Lived nine hundred years apiece, and mayn't the king as well as they ?'
 'Fervently,' exclaim'd the keeper, 'fervently, I trust he may.'

'He to die,' resumed the bishop. 'He a mortal like to us ?
 Death was not for him intended, though *communis omnibus* ;
 Keeper, you are irreligious, for to talk and cavil thus.

'With his wondrous skill in healing ne'er a doctor can compete,
 Loathsome lepers, if he touch them, start up clean upon their feet ;
 Surely he could raise the dead up, did his Highness think it meet.

‘ Did not once the Jewish captain stay the sun upon the hill,
And, the while he slew the foemen, bid the silver moon stand still ?
So, no doubt, could gracious Canute, if it were his sacred will.’

‘ Might I stay the sun above us, good Sir Bishop ?’ Canute cried;
‘ Could I bid the silver moon to pause upon her heavenly ride ?
If the moon obeys my orders, sure I can command the tide.

‘ Will the advancing waves obey me, bishop, if I make the sign ?’
Said the bishop, bowing lowly, ‘ Land and sea, my lord, are thine.’
Canute turn’d towards the ocean—‘ Back !’ he said, ‘ thou foaming
brine.

‘ From the sacred shore I stand on, I command thee to retreat ;
Venture not, thou stormy rebel, to approach thy master’s seat ;
Ocean, be thou still ! I bid thee come not nearer to my feet !’

But the sullen ocean answer’d with a louder, deeper roar,
And the rapid waves drew nearer, falling sounding on the shore ;
Back the keeper and the bishop, back the king and courtiers bore.

And he sternly bade them never more to kneel to human clay,
But alone to praise and worship that which earth and seas obey,
And his golden crown of empire never wore he from that day.
King Canute is dead and gone : Parasites exist alway.”

We must say a few words on his merits as an artist and a critic of art. We can hardly agree with those who hold that he failed as an artist, and then took to his pen. There is no proof of failure ; his art accomplishes all he sets it to. Had he, instead of being a gentleman’s son, brought up at the Charter-house and Cambridge, been born in the parish of St. Bartholomew the Great, and apprenticed, let us say, when thirteen years old, to Raimbach the engraver, we might have had another, and in some ways a subtler Hogarth. He draws well ; his mouths and noses, his feet, his children’s heads, all his ugly and queer “ mugs,” are wonderful for expression and good drawing. With beauty of man or woman he is not so happy ; but his fun is, we think, even more abounding and *funnier* in his cuts than in his words. The love of fun in him was something quite peculiar. Some writers have been more witty ; a few have had a more delicate humour ; but none, we think, have had more of that

genial quality which is described by the homely word *fun*. It lay partly in imitation, as in the "Novels by Eminent Hands." Indeed there were few things more singular in his intellectual organisation than the coincidence of absolute originality of thought and style with exquisite mimetic power. But it oftener showed itself in a pure love of nonsense—only nonsense of the highest order. He was very fond of abandoning himself to this temper; witness the "Story *à la Mode*" in the "Cornhill," some of the reality-giving touches in which would have done credit to Gulliver. Major Gahagan is far funnier than Baron Munchausen; and where is there more exquisite nonsense than "The Rose and the Ring," with the "little beggar baby that laughed and sang as droll as may be?" There is also much of this spirit in his ballads,¹ especially, as we have already said, the series by Pleaceman X.; but we are inclined to think that it finds most scope in his drawings. We well remember our surprise on coming upon some of his earlier works for "Punch."

¹ We subjoin an astonishing piece of nonsense—a species of song or ditty which he chanted, we believe, *extempore*; [in singing, each line to be repeated twice]:—

"LITTLE BILLEE

There were 3 sailors in Bristol city,
Who took a boat and went to sea.

But first with beef and captain's biscuit,
And pickled pork they loaded she.

There was guzzling Jack and gorging Jimmy,
And the youngest he was little Billee.

Now very soon, they were so greedy,
They didn't leave not one split pea.

Says guzzling Jack to gorging Jimmy,
'I am extremely hungaree.'

Says gorging Jim to guzzling Jacky,
'We have no provisions, so we must eat we.'

Says guzzling Jack to gorging Jimmy,
'O gorging Jim, what a fool you be!

There's little Bill is young and tender,
We're old and tough, so let's eat he.'

'O Bill, we're going to kill and eat you,
So undo the collar of your chemie.'

When Bill received this infumation
He used his pocket-handkerchie.

'O let me say my catechism,
As my poor mammy taught to me.'

'Make haste, make haste,' says guzzling
Jacky,
While Jim pulled out his snickersnee.

So Bill went up the main-top-gallant mast,
Where down he fell on his bended knee.

He scarce had come to the Twelfth Com-
mandment,

When up he jumps, 'There's land, I see.

There's Jerusalem and Madagascar,
And North and South Amerikee.

There's the British fleet a riding at anchor,
With Admiral Nelson, K.C.B.'

So when they came to the admiral's vessel,
He hanged fat Jack and flogged Jimmee.

But as for little Bill, he made him
The captain of a seventy-three."

Best of all was an impressive series illustrative of the following passage in the "Times" of December 7, 1843 :—"The agents of the tract societies have lately had recourse to a new method of introducing their tracts into Cadiz. The tracts were put into glass bottles *securely corked*; and, taking advantage of the tide flowing into the harbour, they were committed to the waves, on whose surface they floated towards the town, where the inhabitants eagerly took them up on their arriving at the shore. The bottles were then uncorked, and the tracts they contain are *supposed to have been* read with much interest." The purpose of the series is to hold up to public odium the Dissenting tract-smuggler—Tractistero dissentero contrabandistero. The first cut represents a sailor, "thirsty as the seaman naturally is," rushing through the surf to seize the bottle which has been bobbing towards him. "Sherry, perhaps," he exclaims to himself and his friend. Second cut: the thirsty expectant has the bottle in position, and is drawing the cork, another mariner, and a little wondering boy, capitally drawn, looking on. "Rum, I hope," is the thought of each. Lastly we have the awful result: our friend holds up on the cork-screw to his companion and the universe "a spanish translation of the Cow-boy of Kensington Common," with an indignant "Tracts, by jingo!" Then there is John Balliol, in "Miss Tickletoy's Lectures," "cutting" into England on a ragged sheltie, which is trotting like a maniac over a series of boulders, sorely discomposing the rider, whose kilt is of the shortest. Even better is the cut illustrative of the ballad of "King Canute," the king and his courtiers on the shore, with bathing-machines and the Union-jack in the distance; and a most preposterous representation of the *non Angli sed Angeli* story. We wish Mr. Thackeray's excellent friends, the pro-

prietors of "Punch," would reprint all his odds and ends, with their woodcuts. They will get the laughter and gratitude of mankind if they do.

He is, as far as we recollect, the only great author who illustrated his own works. This gives a singular completeness to the result. When his pen has said its say, then comes his pencil and adds its own felicity. Take the original edition of the Book of Snobs, all those delicious Christmas little quartos, especially "Mrs. Perkins' Ball" and the "Rose and the Ring" (one of the most perfectly realised ideas we know of), and see how complete is the duet between the eye and the mind, between word and figure. There is an etching in the "Paris Sketch-Book" which better deserves to be called "high art" than most of the class so called. It is Majesty in the person of "Le Grand Monarque" in and stripped of its externals, which are there also by themselves. The lean and slippered old pantaloon is tottering peevishly on his staff, his other hand in his waistcoat-pocket; his head absolutely bald; his whole aspect pitiable and forlorn, querulous and absurd. To his left is his royal self, in all his glory of high-heeled boots, three-storied flowing wig, his orders, and sword, and all his "dread magnificence," as we know him in his pictures; on his right we behold, and somehow feel as if the old creature, too, is in awe of them—his clothes, *per se*—the "properties" of the great European actor, set ingeniously up, and looking as grand and much steadier than with him inside. The idea and the execution are full of genius. The frontispice of the same book contains a study of Heads, than which Hogarth certainly never did anything better. These explanatory lines are below the picture:—

"Number 1's an ancient Carlist, number 3 a Paris artist;
Gloomily there stands between them, number 2, a Bonapartist;



Dr. Gress with Alice Grant.
To S. Kelly

In the middle is King Louis Philip standing at his ease,
 Guarded by a loyal grocer, and a serjeant of police ;
 4's the people in a passion, 6 a priest of pious mien,
 5 a gentleman of fashion copied from a magazine."

No words can do justice to the truth and power of this group of characters : it gives a history of France during the Orleans dynasty.

We give on the opposite page a facsimile of a drawing sent by him to a friend, with the following note :—

" Behold a drawing instead of a letter. I've been thinking of writing you a beautiful one ever so long, but, etc. etc. And instead of doing my duty this morning, I began this here drawing, and will pay your debt some other day—no, *part* of your debt. I intend to owe the rest, and like to owe it, and think I'm sincerely grateful to you always, my dear good friends.
 W. M. T."

This drawing is a good specimen of his work ; it tells its own story, as every drawing should. Here is the great lexicographer, with his ponderous shuffling tread, his thick lips, his head bent down, his book close to his purblind eyes, himself *totus in illo*, reading, as he fed, greedily and fast. Beside him simper the clumsy and inspired Oliver, in his new plum-coloured coat ; his eyes bent down in an ecstasy of delight, for is he not far prouder of his visage, and such a visage ! and of his coat, than of his artless genius ? We all know about that coat, and how Mr. Filby never got paid for it. There he is behind his window in sartorial posture ; his uplifted goose arrested, his eye following wistfully, and not without a sense of glory and dread, that coat and man. His journeyman is grinning at him ; he is paid weekly, and has no risk. And then what a genuine bit of Thackeray, the street boy and his dear little admiring sister !—there they are, stepping out in mimicry of the great two. Observe the

careful, honest work, and how the turn of the left foot of the light-hearted and heeled *gamin*—whose toes, much innocent of shoes, have a prehensile look about them, suggestive of the Huxley grandfather—is corrected, as also Dr. Goldsmith's. He could never let anything remain if it was untrue.

It would not be easy to imagine better criticisms of art than those from Mr. Thackeray's hand in "Fraser," in "Punch," in a kindly and beautiful paper on our inimitable John Leech in the "Quarterly," in a Roundabout on Rubens, and throughout his stories—especially the "Newcomes"—wherever art comes in. He touches the matter to the quick; and touches nothing else: and while sensitive to all true and great art, he detects and detests all that is false or mean. He is not so imaginative, not so impassioned and glorious, not so amazing in illustration, and in painting better than pictures, as Mr. Ruskin, who has done more for art and its true interests than all other writers. But he is more to be trusted because he is more objective, more cool, more critical in the true sense. He sees everything by the *lumen siccum*, though it by no means follows that he does not feel as well as see; but here, as in everything else, his art "has its seat in reason, and is judicious." Here is his description of Turner's Old Téméraire, from a paper on the Royal Academy in "Fraser." We can give it no higher praise than that it keeps its own with Ruskin's:—

"I must request you to turn your attention to a noble river piece, by J. W. M. Turner, Esq., R.A., 'The Fighting Téméraire,' as grand a painting as ever figured on the walls of any academy, or came from the easel of any painter. The old Téméraire is dragged to her last home by a little, spiteful, diabolical steamer. A mighty red sun, amidst a host of flaring clouds, sinks to rest on one side of the picture, and illumines a river that seems interminable, and a countless

navy that fades away into such a wonderful distance as never was painted before. The little demon of a steamer is belching out a volume (why do I say a volume? not a hundred volumes could express it) of foul, lurid, red-hot, malignant smoke, paddling furiously, and lashing up the water round about it; while behind it (a cold, grey moon looking down on it), slow, sad, and majestic, follows the brave old ship, with death as it were, written on her. . . . It is absurd, you will say (and with a great deal of reason), for Titmarsh or any other Briton, to grow so politically enthusiastic about a four-foot canvas, representing a ship, a steamer, a river, and a sunset. But herein surely lies the power of the great artist. He makes you see and think of a great deal more than the objects before you; he knows how to soothe or to intoxicate, to fire or to depress, by a few notes, or forms, or colours, of which we cannot trace the effect to the source, but only acknowledge the power. I recollect some years ago, at the theatre at Weimar, hearing Beethoven's 'Battle of Vittoria,' in which, amidst a storm of glorious music, the air of 'God save the King,' was introduced. The very instant it begun, every Englishman in the house was bolt upright, and so stood reverently until the air was played out. Why so? From some such thrill of excitement as makes us glow and rejoice over Mr. Turner and his 'Fighting Téméraire,' which I am sure, when the art of translating colours into poetry or music shall be discovered, will be found to be a magnificent national ode or piece of music."

When speaking of "The Slave Ship" by the same amazing artist, he says, with delightful *naïveté*, "I don't know whether it is sublime or ridiculous,"—a characteristic instance of his outspoken truthfulness; and he lays it down that the "first quality of an artist is to have a large heart," believing that all art, all imaginative work of the highest order, must originate in and be addressed to the best powers of the soul, must "submit the shows of things to the desires of the mind."

Mr. Trollope says, in the "Cornhill" for this February, "that which the world will most want to know

of Thackeray is the effect which his writings have produced." In one sense of the word, the world is not likely ever to find this out; it is a matter which each man must determine for himself. But the world can perhaps ascertain what special services Mr. Thackeray has rendered; and it is this probably which Mr. Trollope means. His great service has been in his exposure of the prevailing faults of his time. Among the foremost are the faults of affectation and pretence, but there is one yet more grievous than these—the sceptical spirit of the age. This he has depicted in the gentlest and saddest of all his books, "Pendennis:"—

"And it will be seen that the lamentable stage to which his logic at present has brought him" (Arthur Pendennis), is one of general scepticism, and sneering acquiescence in the world as it is; or if you like so to call it, a belief qualified with scorn in all things extant. . . . And to what does this easy and sceptical life lead a man? Friend Arthur was a Sadducee, and the Baptist might be in the wilderness shouting to the poor, who were listening with all their might and faith to the preacher's awful accents and denunciations of wrath or woe or salvation; and our friend the Sadducee would turn his sleek mule with a shrug and a smile from the crowd, and go home to the shade of his terrace, and muse over preacher and audience, and turn to his roll of Plato, or his pleasant Greek song-book babbling of honey and Hybla, and nymphs and fountains and love. To what, we say, does this scepticism lead? It leads a man to a shameful loneliness and selfishness, so to speak—the more shameful, because it is so good-humoured and conscienceless and serene. Conscience! What is conscience? Why accept remorse? What is public or private faith? Mythuses alike enveloped in enormous tradition."

The delineation is not a pleasant one, but it is true. The feeling hardly deserves to be called scepticism; it is rather a calm indifferentism; a putting aside of all things sacred. And as the Sadducees of Judea were,

on the whole, better men than the Pharisees, so this modern Sadducean feeling prevails not only among the cultivated classes, but among those conspicuously honourable and upright. These men, in fact, want spiritual guides and teachers. The clergy do not supply this want ; most of them refuse to acknowledge its existence ; Mr. Thackeray, with his fearless truthfulness, sees it, and tells it. To cure it is not within his province. As a lay-preacher, only the secondary principles of morality are at his command. " Be each, pray God, a gentleman," is his highest sanction. But though he cannot tell the afflicted whither to turn, it is no slight thing to have laid bare the disorder from which so many suffer, and which all, with culpable cowardice, study to conceal. And he does more than lay bare the disorder ; he convinces us how serious it is. He does this by showing us its evil effect on a good and kindly nature. No teaching can be more impressive than the contrast between Pendennis under the influence of this sceptical spirit, and Warrington, over whom, crushed as he is by hopeless misfortune, it has no power.

The minor vices of affectation and pretension he assails directly. To do this was his especial mission from the first. What success may have attended his efforts we cannot certainly tell. It is to be feared, however, that, despite his teaching, snobs, like poverty, will never cease out of the land. But all who feel guilty—and every one of us is guilty more or less—and who desire to amend, should use the means : the " Book of Snobs " should be read carefully at least once a year. His was not the hortatory method. He had no notion that much could be done by telling people to be good. He found it more telling to show that by being otherwise they were in danger of becoming unhappy, ridiculous, and contemptible. Yet

he did not altogether neglect positive teaching. Many passages might be taken from his works—even from the remorseless “Book of Snobs” itself—which inculcate the beauty of goodness ; and the whole tendency of his writings, from the first to the last line he penned during a long and active literary life, has invariably been to inspire reverence for manliness and purity and truth. And to sum up all, in representing after his measure the characteristics of the age, Mr. Thackeray has discharged one of the highest functions of a writer. His keen insight into modern life has enabled him to show his readers that life fully : his honesty and high tone of mind has enabled him to do this truly. Hence he is the healthiest of writers. In his pages we find no false stimulus, no pernicious ideals, no vulgar aims. We are led to look at things as they really are, and to rest satisfied with our place among them. Each man learns that he can do much if he preserves moderation ; that if he goes beyond his proper sphere he is good for nothing. He teaches us to find a fitting field for action in our peculiar studies or business, to reap lasting happiness in the affections which are common to all. Our vague longings are quieted ; our foolish ambitions checked ; we are soothed into contentment with obscurity—encouraged in an honest determination to do our duty.

A “Roundabout Paper” on the theme *Nil nisi bonum* concludes thus :—

“ Here are two literary men gone to their account ; and, *laus Deo*, as far as we know, it is fair, and open, and clean. Here is no need of apologies for shortcomings, or explanations of vices which would have been virtues but for unavoidable, etc. Here are two examples of men most differently gifted : each pursuing his calling ; each speaking his truth as God bade him ; each honest in his life ; just and irreproachable in his dealings ; dear to his friends ; honoured by his

country; beloved at his fireside. It has been the fortunate lot of both to give incalculable happiness and delight to the world, which thanks them in return with an immense kindness, respect, affection. It may not be our chance, brother scribe, to be endowed with such merit, or rewarded with such fame. But the rewards of these men are rewards paid to our service. We may not win the baton or epaulettes; but God give us strength to guard the honour of the flag!"

The prayer was granted: he had strength given him always to guard the honour of the flag; and now his name is worthy to be placed beside the names of Washington Irving and Lord Macaulay, as of one no whit less deserving the praise of these noble words.

We have seen no satisfactory portrait of Mr. Thackeray. We like the photographs better than the prints; and we have an old daguerreotype of him without his spectacles which is good; but no photograph can give more of a man than is in any one ordinary—often very ordinary—look of him; it is only Sir Joshua and his brethren who can paint a man liker than himself. Laurence's first drawing has much of his thoroughbred look, but the head is too much tossed up and *vif*. The photograph from the later drawing by the same hand we like better: he is alone and reading with his book close up to his eyes. This gives the prodigious size and solidity of his head, and the sweet mouth. We have not seen that by Mr. Watts, but if it is as full of power and delicacy as his Tennyson, it will be a comfort.

Though in no sense a selfish man, he had a wonderful interest in himself as an object of study, and nothing could be more delightful and unlike anything else than to listen to him on himself. He often draws his own likeness in his books. In the "Fraserians" by Maclise, in "Fraser," is a slight sketch of him in his unknown youth; and there is an excessively funny

and not unlike extravaganza of him by Doyle or Leech, in the "Month," a little short-lived periodical, edited by Albert Smith. He is represented lecturing, when certainly he looked his best. We give below what is like him in face as well as in more.



The tired, young, kindly wag is sitting and looking into space, his mask and his jester's rod lying idly on his knees.

The foregoing estimate of his genius must stand instead of any special portraiture of the man. Yet we would mention two leading traits of character traceable, to a large extent, in his works, though finding no appropriate place in a literary criticism of them. One was the deep steady melancholy of his nature. He was fond of telling how on one occasion, at Paris, he found himself in a great crowded *salon*; and looking from the one end across the sea of heads, being in Swift's place of calm in a crowd,¹ he saw at the other end a strange visage, staring at him with an expression of comical woebegoneness. After a little he found that this rueful being was himself in the mirror. He was not, indeed, morose. He was alive to and thankful for everyday blessings, great and small; for the happiness of home, for friendship, for wit and music, for beauty of all kinds, for the pleasures of the "faithful old gold pen;" now running into some felicitous

¹ "An inch or two above it."

expression, now playing itself into some droll initial letter ; nay, even for the creature comforts. But his persistent state, especially for the later half of his life, was profoundly *morne*—there is no other word for it. This arose in part from temperament, from a quick sense of the littleness and wretchedness of mankind. His keen perception of the meanness and vulgarity of the realities around him contrasted with the ideal present to his mind could produce no other effect. This feeling, embittered by disappointment, acting on a harsh and savage nature, ended in the *sæva indignatio* of Swift ; acting on the kindly and too sensitive nature of Mr. Thackeray, it led only to compassionate sadness. In part, too, this melancholy was the result of private calamities. He alludes to these often in his writings, and a knowledge that his sorrows were great is necessary to the perfect appreciation of much of his deepest pathos. We allude to them here, painful as the subject is, mainly because they have given rise to stories—some quite untrue, some even cruelly injurious. The loss of his second child in infancy was always an abiding sorrow—described in the “Hoggarty Diamond,” in a passage of surpassing tenderness, too sacred to be severed from its context.¹ A yet keener and more constantly present affliction was the illness of his wife. He married her in Paris when he was “mewing his mighty youth,” preparing for the great career which awaited him. One likes to think on these early days of happiness, when he could draw and write with that loved companion by his side : he has himself sketched the picture :—“The humblest painter, be he ever so poor, may have a friend watching at his easel, or a gentle wife sitting by with her work in her lap, and with fond smiles or talk or silence, cheering his

¹ Also in “The Virginians,” vol. ii.

labours." After some years of marriage, Mrs. Thackeray caught a fever, brought on by imprudent exposure at a time when the effects of such ailments are more than usually lasting both on the system and the nerves. She never afterwards recovered so as to be able to be with her husband and children. But she has been from the first intrusted to the good offices of a kind family, tenderly cared for, surrounded with every comfort by his unwearied affection. The beautiful lines in the ballad of the "Bouillabaisse" are well known :—

"Ah me! how quick the days are flitting!
I mind me of a time that's gone,
When here I'd sit as now I'm sitting,
In this same place—but not alone.
A fair young form was nestled near me,
A dear, dear face looked fondly up,
And sweetly spoke and smiled to cheer me,
—There's no one now to share my cup."

In one of the latest Roundabouts we have this touching confession :—"I own for my part that, in reading pages which this hand penned formerly, I often lose sight of the text under my eyes. It is not the words I see ; but that past day ; that bygone page of life's history ; that tragedy, comedy it may be, which our little home-company was enacting ; that merry-making which we shared ; that funeral which we followed ; that bitter, bitter grief which we buried." But all who knew him know well, and love to recall, how these sorrows were soothed and his home made a place of happiness by his two daughters and his mother, who were his perpetual companions, delights, and blessings, and whose feeling of inestimable loss now will be best borne and comforted by remembering how they were everything to him, as he was to them.

His sense of a higher Power, his reverence and

godly fear, is felt more than expressed—as indeed it mainly should always be—in everything he wrote. It comes out at times quite suddenly, and stops at once, in its full strength. We could readily give many instances of this. One we give, as it occurs very early, when he was probably little more than six-and-twenty; it is from the paper, “Madame Sand and the New Apocalypse.” Referring to Henri Heine’s frightful words, “*Dieu qui se meurt*,” “*Dieu est mort*,” and to the wild godlessness of *Spiridion*, he thus bursts out:—“O awful, awful name of God! Light unbearable! mystery unfathomable! vastness immeasurable! Who are these who come forward to explain the mystery, and gaze unblinking into the depths of the light, and measure the immeasurable vastness to a hair? O name that God’s people of old did fear to utter! O light that God’s prophet would have perished had he seen! who are these now so familiar with it?” In ordinary intercourse the same sudden “*Te Deum*” would occur, always brief and intense, like lightning from a cloudless heaven; he seemed almost ashamed—not of it, but of his giving it expression.

We cannot resist here recalling one Sunday evening in December, when he was walking with two friends along the Dean road, to the west of Edinburgh—one of the noblest outlets to any city. It was a lovely evening, such a sunset as one never forgets; a rich dark bar of cloud hovered over the sun, going down behind the Highland hills, lying bathed in amethystine bloom; between this cloud and the hills there was a narrow slip of the pure æther, of a tender cow-slip colour, lucid, and as if it were the very body of heaven in its clearness; every object standing out as if etched upon the sky. The north-west end of Corstorphine Hill, with its trees and rocks, lay in the

heart of this pure radiance, and there a wooden crane, used in the quarry below, was so placed as to assume the figure of a cross ; there it was, unmistakable, lifted up against the crystalline sky. All three gazed at it silently. As they gazed, he gave utterance in a tremulous, gentle, and rapid voice, to what all were feeling, in the word "CALVARY !" The friends walked on in silence, and then turned to other things. All that evening he was very gentle and serious, speaking, as he seldom did, of divine things,—of death, of sin, of eternity, of salvation ; expressing his simple faith in God and in his Saviour.

There is a passage at the close of the "Roundabout Paper," No. XXIII., *De Finibus*, in which a sense of the ebb of life is very marked ; the whole paper is like a soliloquy. It opens with a drawing of Mr. Punch, with unusually mild eye, retiring for the night ; he is putting out his high-heeled shoes, and before disappearing gives a wistful look into the passage, as if bidding it and all else good-night. He will be in bed, his candle out, and in darkness, in five minutes, and his shoes found next morning at his door, the little potentate all the while in his final sleep. The whole paper is worth the most careful study ; it reveals not a little of his real nature, and unfolds very curiously the secret of his work, the vitality, and abiding power of his own creations ; how he "invented a certain *Costigan*, out of scraps, heel-taps, odds and ends of characters," and met the original the other day, without surprise, in a tavern parlour. The following is beautiful :—"Years ago, I had a quarrel with a certain well-known person (I believed a statement regarding him which his friends imparted to me, and which turned out to be quite incorrect). To his dying day that quarrel was never quite made up. I said to his brother, 'Why is your brother's soul still

dark against me? *It is I who ought to be angry and unforgiving, for I was in the wrong.*” *Odisse quem læseris* was never better contravened. But what we chiefly refer to now is the profound pensiveness of the following strain, as if written with a presentiment of what was not then very far off: “Another *Finis* written; another milestone on this journey from birth to the next world. Sure it is a subject for solemn cogitation. Shall we continue this story-telling business, and be voluble to the end of our age? Will it not be presently time, O prattler, to hold your tongue?” And thus he ends:—

“Oh, the sad old pages, the dull old pages; oh, the cares, the *ennui*, the squabbles, the repetitions, the old conversations over and over again! But now and again a kind thought is recalled, and now and again a dear memory. Yet a few chapters more, and then the last; after which, behold *Finis* itself comes to an end, and the Infinite begins.”

He sent the proof of this paper to his “dear neighbours,” in Onslow Square, to whom he owed so much almost daily pleasure, with his corrections, the whole of the last paragraph in manuscript, and above a first sketch of it also in ms., which is fuller and more impassioned. His fear of “enthusiastic writing” had led him, we think, to sacrifice something of the sacred power of his first words, which we give with its interlineations:—

“Another *Finis*, another slice of life which *Tempus edax* has devoured! And I may have to write the word once or twice perhaps, and then an end of Ends. Finite is over, and Infinite beginning. Oh the troubles, the cares, the *ennui*,
disputes
the complications, the repetitions, the old conversations over and over again, and here and there and oh the delightful passages, the dear, the brief, the for ever remembered! And then A few chapters more, and then the last, and then behold *Finis* itself coming to an end and the Infinite beginning!”

How like music this—like one trying the same air in different ways ; as it were searching out and sounding all its depths ! “ The dear, the brief, the for ever remembered ; ” these are like a bar out of Beethoven, deep and melancholy as the sea ! He had been suffering on Sunday from an old and cruel enemy. He fixed with his friend and surgeon to come again on Tuesday ; but with that dread of anticipated pain, which is a common condition of sensibility and genius, he put him off with a note from “ yours unfaithfully, W. M. T. ” He went out on Wednesday for a little, and came home at ten. He went to his room, suffering much, but declining his man’s offer to sit with him. He hated to make others suffer. He was heard moving, as if in pain, about twelve, on the eve of

“ That the happy morn,
Wherein the Son of Heaven’s eternal King,
Of wedded maid, and virgin-mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring.”

Then all was quiet, and then he must have died—in a moment. Next morning his man went in, and opening the windows found his master dead, his arms behind his head, as if he had tried to take one more breath. We think of him as of our Chalmers ; found dead in like manner ; the same child-like, unspoiled open face ; the same gentle mouth ; the same spaciousness and softness of nature ; the same look of power. What a thing to think of,—his lying there alone in the dark, in the midst of mighty London ; his mother and his daughters asleep, and, it may be, dreaming of his goodness. God help them, and us all ! What would become of us, stumbling along this our path of life, if we could not, at our utmost need, stay ourselves on Him ?

Long years of sorrow, labour, and pain had killed

him before his time. It was found after death how little life he had to live. He looked always fresh with that abounding, silvery hair, and his young, almost infantine face, but he was worn to a shadow and his hands wasted as if by eighty years. With him it is the end of Ends; finite is over, and infinite begun. What we all felt and feel can never be so well expressed as in his own words of sorrow for the early death of Charles Buller—

“ Who knows the inscrutable design?
Blest be He who took and gave!
Why should your mother, Charles, not mine,
Be weeping at her darling's grave?
We bow to Heaven that will'd it so,
That darkly rules the fate of all,
That sends the respite or the blow,
That's free to give, or to recall.”



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